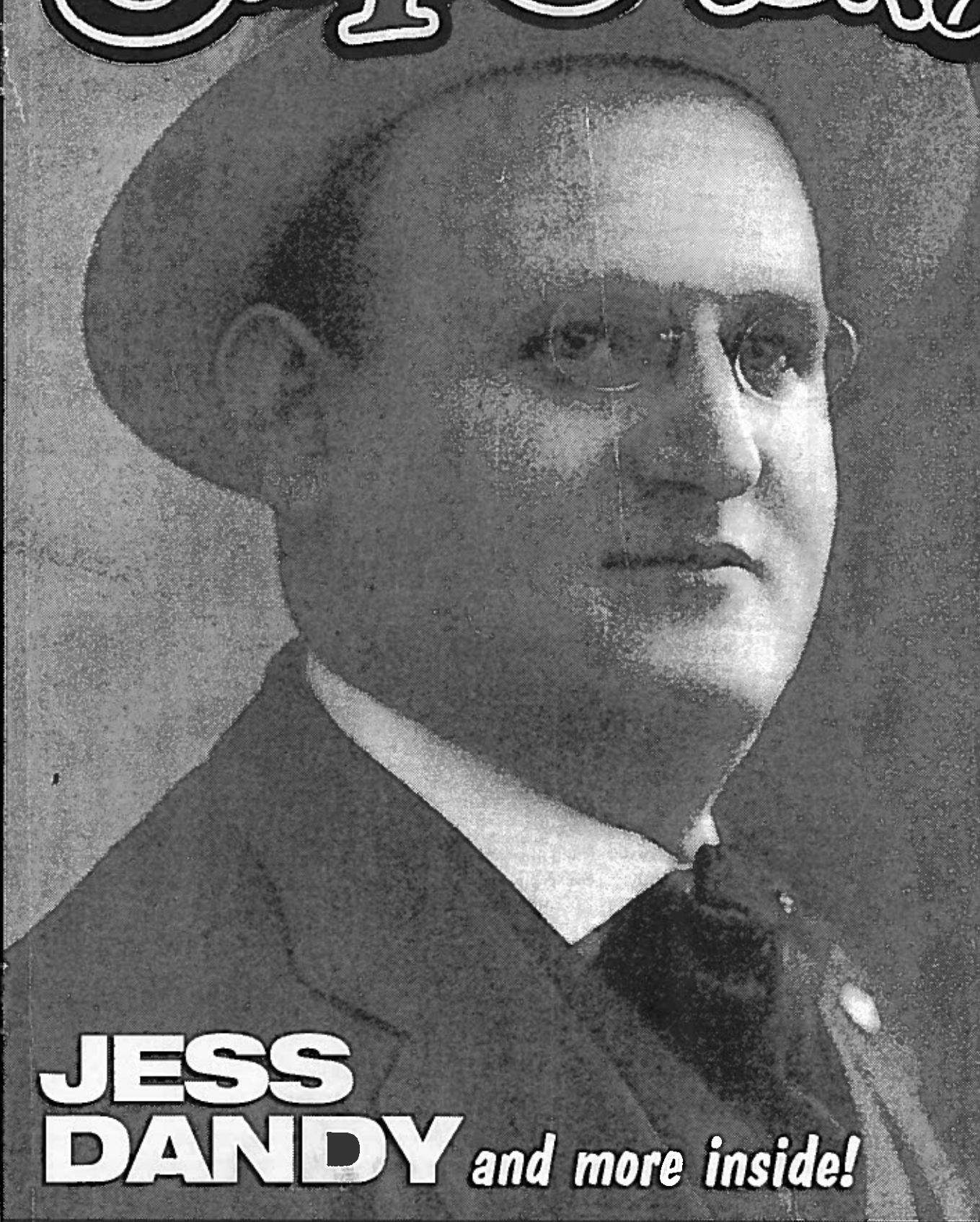


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SlapStick!

Welcome to our seventh issue of *Slapstick!*

I've enjoyed putting this one together and this particular issue just might be my favorite (so far!). New contributors and some of our "regulars" are here with new discoveries, updates and more to make this seventh issue pretty exciting to me.

Thanks for all your letters with suggestions, questions, additions and corrections; I've read them all and I'm sorry if you don't find them printed here – I ran out of room – but I do hear you! So please keep the letters coming!

Please remember to support our advertisers, as they are our biggest supporter and without them (and you dear readers!), there'd be no *Slapstick!*

I want to thank Barbara Danzig, Michael Campino, Brent Walker, Steve Massa, Elif Rongen-Kaynakci, Georges D'Acunto, Cathy Childs, Sam Gill, Cole Johnson, (and their assistants), for all their help with this issue. Last but not least, thanks again to the new Mrs. Claudia Sassen-Kuehnlein. Congratulations and Best of Luck to you both, Claudia and Peter, from all your friends and the readers of *Slapstick!*

Other big last minute news is the discovery of Ben Turpin's *A Raspberry Romance* which, at this writing, will soon begin its restoration process. Must thank all the great people at the Nederlands Filmmuseum for this! *There can never be enough Turpin comedies!*

Enjoy this issue and we'll see everyone in June 2003. *Happy Holidays and a Happy & Healthy New Year to all!*



ALICE HOWELL and MARCEL PEREZ UPDATE

By Steve Massa

Since finishing SLAPSTICK! articles on the careers of Alice Howell and Marcel Perez, a lot of new material has continued to turn up. I'd like to give our fearless editor a big thank you for the opportunity to post a second update. Since it's always polite to go with ladies first we'll start with Alice.

ALICE HOWELL:

LOST FILM FOUND –

Neptune's Naughty Daughter (5/1917) PD: Century. Dist: Longacre Dist. Corp. D: John G. Blystone. C: Alice Howell. 2 rs.

Elif Rongen at the Nederlands Filmmuseum turned up an unidentified chunk which appears to be from this short. Elif gives this description:

"Alice is in a boat rowing. She has luggage and a black poodle with her. Her father meets her at the dock, unloads her luggage and gives her a kick. Soon she is home with her mother and little toddler sister. She is arguing and making a scene. Later she secretly meets her boyfriend who is with the navy. Her dad follows with a rifle and fires on the boyfriend. That night the boyfriend comes to her house with a ladder and they elope. They go to a café with many naval officers, and there a fat sea captain is attracted to Alice. Here our fragment ends."

In 1917 Abe and Julius Stern set up Century Comedies to produce Alice's films, and Neptune's Naughty Daughter was the fourth title. That first year the shorts were released on a states rights basis, then in early 1918 Universal picked up the distribution. None of the other 1917 Century's are known to exist, which makes this find a very welcome addition.

NEW TITLES –

1) LOVER'S LUCK (9/19/1914) PD: Keystone Film Co. Dist: Mutual Film Corp. D: Roscoe Arbuckle. C: Roscoe Arbuckle, Minta Durfee, Frank Hayes, Phyllis Allen, Frank Opperman, Alice Howell, Slim Summerville. 1 reel.

A screening of this funny Roscoe Arbuckle one-reeler revealed Alice in the supporting cast as the leader of a group of lower-class neighbors who are snooping and watching the antics of Fatty, Minta, and Frank Hayes with great relish (these were the days before television). Of the 1914 Keystones only the Chaplin's have really been documented and are in circulation, so it's impossible to know exactly how many Alice actually appeared in. Based on her recollections in 1920, she was working as much as she could, so she probably turned up very regularly.

2) SHOULD POKER PLAYERS MARRY? (3/3/1924) PD: Universal. D: William Watson. C: Alice Howell, Neely Edwards, Bert Roach. 1 rl.

A review in the Moving Picture World of March 8, 1924 stated: "This comedy, which deals with the troubles a married man has in eluding his wife so as to join the boys in a little game of poker, is one of the very best of

the series starring Neely Edwards and Bert Roach, who forsake their familiar tramp characterizations. Of special interest is the appearance of Alice Howell as the wife. There are a number of amusing situations, several of which she is responsible for."

This is the earliest title I've found for the Howell/Edwards/Roach series, and the reviewer's special notice of Alice's appearance suggests that it may have indeed been the very first. As noted, Neely and Bert were already teamed, usually as hobos, and when Alice was added to the mix the series became about a married couple and their goofy butler. Like most of the films in this series this one is not known to exist.

NEW PIECES OF INFO –

1) Alice started as a bit and background player at Keystone somewhere near the beginning of 1914 and soon graduated to bigger roles. In a Moving Picture World interview from 6/26/1920 she tells how she caught Mack Sennett's eye:

"It started about five years ago at the Mack Sennett studio. I was one of the mob in a police raid. Suddenly I threw myself into the thick of the fray. The other women drew back. We all had on evening gowns and the girls didn't want to spoil them. I had no scruples. I fell downstairs and literally wiped up the floor with my gown. Mack Sennett was impressed and decided to give me a chance. Ever since then I have been expected to inject a lot of slapstick into my performances."

2) In 1920 Alice and her husband Dick Smith left Hollywood and began a series of comedies for Emerald Pictures in Chicago. After the series began Emerald merged with other concerns to form Reelcraft Pictures Corporation. Of her Emerald/Reelcraft shorts CINDERELLA CINDERS, HER LUCKY DAY, BARGAIN DAY (with location scenes shot at Marshall Field's department store), HIS WOODEN LEGACY, RUBES AND ROMANCES, and LUNATICS IN POLITICS were shot in Chicago. Reelcraft then brought them back to California where GOOD NIGHT NURSE, CONVICT'S HAPPY BRIDE, and SQUIRREL TIME were made. The only exception was DISTILLED LOVE, which had been shot earlier by L-KO or Century, but released with the others by Reelcraft.

3) After Alice and Smith finished their series for Reelcraft, the 12/4/1920 issue of Moving Picture World announced:

Celebrated Players Secures United States Rights To Sunkist Comedies With Alice Howell As Star

J.L. Friedman, president of CPFC, Chicago, has closed with George B. West, general manager of Sunkist Comedy Co. for the entire United States rights to the new series of one-reel Alice Howell comedies. These comedies have met with the highest praise. They were directed by Dick Smith and present the





Alice, Phil Dunham, Frank J. Coleman, and an unidentified player in an unidentified comedy, c 1918. Photo courtesy Robert Arkus.

comedienne in roles in which she excels – a la unadulterated slapstick.

The Sunkist Company is making a series of 52 single reel comedies. The first to be released with Miss Howell starring will be "BOULEVARD PROFITEERS." This will be followed by "WHO CHOSE YOUR WIFE?"

George B. West was the brother of comedian Billy West, and his partner in the later West Brothers productions. Outside of a few items and exhibitor ads boldly announcing 52 releases a year, little is known about this venture or how many were actually made and released.

4) Some new bits have also turned up on Alice's husband and frequent comedy partner Dick Smith. The couple originally moved to California, and Alice entered films, while Smith was recovering from tuberculosis. His progress must have been fairly rapid as I've recently spotted him in small roles in two late 1914 Keystone's – GUSSETHE GOLFER and THE NOISE OF BOMBS. Soon he would become a regular member of the comedy company at L-KO.

In the early 1920's Smith stopped performing and concentrated on directing. In the spring of 1921 he directed the lost Marx Brothers short HUMOR RISK, and while he was in New York the Moving Picture World announced that he was set to direct a new series of Aladdin comedies starring Pearl Shepard and Billy Gilbert for Reelcraft. At this point it's not known if the series actually happened as Reelcraft was in shaky financial shape and would soon collapse. After this he returned to California and issues of CAMERA magazine from the fall of 1921 list him as assistant director on Universal's comedy series with Harry Sweet, Harry Gribbon, Laura La Plante, and Lee Moran. In 1924 he became one of the studio's most prolific comedy directors and continued to the end of the silent era.

MARCEL PEREZ

LOST FILM FOUND –

WEEK END (1921) Mirth Comedy. PD: Schiller Productions. Dist: Reelcraft. D: Marcel Perez. C: Perez, Dorothy Earle. 2 rls.

Thanks to a lobby card from this short provided to us by Sam Gill, and used as an illustration in the last issue, Elif Rongen was able to identify a copy of this short in the Netherlands. At the moment they only seem to have the first reel, which Elif describes as:

"Tweedy and Dory are home relaxing. They receive an invitation, but Tweedy declines as 'he didn't enjoy himself the last Sunday they were there.' However, Dory insists, and Tweedy agrees. They leave immediately to catch the boat. Tweedy has to get the tickets, but there is a problem with the cab driver (no change?) so Tweedy chases him around and loses time, and misses the boat. In the meantime Dory had already got aboard. Tweedy's two friends, who are also invited, notice Dory and make haste to go and court her. (One of the

actors is a big Mack Swain-type with a moustache. The other is a small guy with a goatee and looks similar to Leo White) Tweedy runs to a cab and tries to catch up with the boat, but has to take a 17 mile "at your own risk" detour because of construction work. Tweedy falls off the cab, which then collides with somebody else. Tweedy constructs a small car with a sail, and goes on with it. In the meantime their host arrives at the port, to get the guests arriving by ship. Tweedy also arrives to the port just in time, but there is no place in the car, so he has to walk to the house and also carry everybody's suitcases with him. At the house they first go swimming, then tennis, and then they go fishing. All three men (including the host who has a wife) are fascinated by Dory and go out of their way to please her. Tweedy is jealous but cannot do anything but work himself into more trouble. When fishing he thinks he's caught a big fish and gets pulled in by it, falling down some waterfalls. But in the end all he got was an old shoe. Here our print ends, and I wonder if we wouldn't have the rest somewhere in our vaults! We'll see."

This series was shot in Yonkers, NY at the old Mittenhal Studio, and Elif mentioned that the ticket office says Day Line and the boat is named the Hendrick Hudson, so the local boat service was used as the location. Perez made about ten Mirth Comedies there for Reelcraft before their bankruptcy in the fall of 1921.

NEW TITLES SCREENED –

Thanks to prints from the Nederlands Filmmuseum I was able to screen the following four Robinet shorts, all produced by Societa Anomina Ambrosio of Turin.

1) LA PRIMA BICICLETTA DI ROBINET (ROBINET'S FIRST BICYCLE) (1910) Robinet is a little boy whose parents give him a new bicycle, which of course leads to catastrophe. This is another variation on Perez's pet theme of an idiot cyclist, which may have begun with Eclipse's THE SHORT-SIGHTED CYCLIST ('07) and continued with ROBINET GUARDIA CICLISTA ('13) and THE NEAR-SIGHTED AUTO-PEDIST ('17).

2) ROBINET E GELOSO (ROBINET IS JEALOUS) (1914)

Suspicious that Robinette is cheating on him our hero follows her to a building to catch her in the act, but keeps bursting into the wrong apartments and ending up in hot water. Finally he finds that she's only commissioned a bust of him as a surprise. A good example of his often used theme of single-minded obsessions leading him to ruin. He's continually punished for his suspicions – he first busts into a dentist's office where a tooth is promptly pulled, then a boxing club where they think he's come to spar and beat him senseless, and finally a health spa, where, in a hilarious sequence, the interns grab him, undress



Marcel Fabre and Robinette. Photos courtesy Elif Rongen-Kaynakci.

him, repeatedly dunk him in a tub of ice water then throw him on a marble table and pummel and massage him.

3) ROBINETTROPO AMATO DA SUA MOGLIE (ROBINET TOO MUCH LOVED BY HIS WIFE) (1912)

Robinet's wife is driving him crazy with her doting – she unfolds and holds his newspaper, feeds him his coffee, wipes his mouth, etc. When he writes a letter she even has to lick the envelope and stamp. In desperation he tries to go out for a walk but she tags along. In the park a man bumps into her leading Robinet to challenge him, but wife makes him safely sit down and then pummels the man senseless herself. Luckily she dozes off while reading to him and he sneaks away and meets a cute girl. His wife catches him and drags him back home. During her big tirade Robinet manages to lock her in a closet and then hooks up with his new sweetheart.

A wonderful short, and, along with A BUSY NIGHT ('16) and SWEET DADDY ('21), one of the best surviving examples of his work. Perez is hilarious with his herky-jerky rhythms. When he meets the girl in the park he first flirts with her by following her in odd little hops, and later after locking his wife in the closet he jumps out of the window and lands in a split second in front of his new sweetheart on one knee in the classic proposal pose. His performance is energetic but also subtle and grounded in the reality of the situation. Gietta Morano plays the wife and is excellent and a great foil. The direction is clean and crisp, and the gags well thought-out and executed.

4) ROBINET INAMORATO DI UNA CHANTEUSE (ROBINET IN LOVE WITH A CABARET SINGER) (1911)

While out on the town Robinet drops in to a cabaret, and becomes smitten with a beautiful singer onstage. He goes backstage to see her and, of course, completely disrupts the show. Before he's thrown out he bribes the singer's maid and gets her address. He goes to her house, gets in, and watches her retire through a keyhole. When he enters the room she screams and our hero's taken off to jail by two cops.

Another crisply directed short, with lots of funny gags. Robinet's obsession with the singer practically makes him a stalker. Gietta Morano is a great asset as the singer, and the two comedy cops perform a charming little precision turn-step before they take Perez off to jail.

5) LE AVVENTURE STRAORDINARISSE DI SATURNINO FARANDOLA (THE EXTRAORDINARY ADEVENTURE OF SATURNINO FARANDOLA) (1914) PD: Ambrosio. D: Marcel Fabre (& uncredited Luigi Maggi). SC: Guido Volante from the novel by Ferdinand Robida. PH: Ottavio De Matteis. ART DIR: Enrico Lupi & Decoroso Bonifani. C: Marcel Fabre, Nilde Barrachi, Filippo Castagnagna, Luciano Manara, Alfredo Bertone, Luigi Stinchi, Armondo Pilotti, Dario Silvestri, Vittorio Tettoni, Oreste Grandi. (Condensed version 78 minutes).

The Pordenone Silent Film Festival in Italy recently screened a beautiful and tinted 35mm print of Perez's parody of the Jules Verne-type of adventure epics. Based on a popular book by Ferdinand Robida, it was originally released serial style in four different episodes. This 78 minute compilation is the only existing version, and while there are continuity problems and a bit too much action crammed together due to the condensation, it's a superb and at times breathtakingly beautiful film. Perez tones down his Robinet persona and plays the young hero who (in spite of being raised by monkeys on a tropical island) is valiant and ever-resourceful in all kinds of fantastic scrapes. The locations include the bottom of the ocean, a mad scientist's laboratory, ancient Asia, an America with hostile Indians, and war dirigibles in the sky. Perez the director keeps his tongue firmly in his cheek, while the scope of the production and sets match many of the epic German films of the teens and 20's, but always remaining charming and funny. In fact the hit of the screening was a hilarious life-sized mechanical whale that swoops down and swallows up Nilde Barrachi.

NEW INFORMATION –

Since SLAPSTICK! #6 I've found one new Robinet title, OSSESSIONE DE ROBINET PER IL BALLO (1910), and in addition to the four Robinets listed above I've been able to verify that the following titles also exist (NFL denotes the Nederlands Filmmuseum):

GLI AUTO – SCAT DI ROBINET (1911)
ROBINET E' TROPPO TIMIDO (1911)

LA SCIMMIA DI ROBINET (1911)
GLI STIVALI DI ROBINET (1911)
ROBINET IN BOLLETTA (1911) (NFL)
ROBINET RICATTATORE (1912) (NFL)
ROBINET RICCO PER DICCI MINUTI (1912) (NFL)
COME ROBINET SPOSO? ROBINETTE (1913)
MADAMIGELLA ROBINET (1913) (NFL)
LA SUOCERA DI ROBINET (1913)
ROBINET REPORTER (1913) (NFL)
COME ROBINET DIVENTO COMICO (1914)
ROBINET PESCATORE (1914) (NFL)

NEW CONFUSION –

Normally when researching an aspect of film history the turning up of new material brings everything into sharper focus, but in Perez's case it often leads to new questions and confusions.

Nilde Barrachi, as Robinette, was co-star in many of his Italian films and joined him for a time in America. At the time of writing my previous article I hadn't been able to see any of the Italian films in which she appeared or find a photograph. From her description in the 4/12/1916 Studio Directory (Hght 6; wght 180; black hair and eyes) I assumed that she was the tall and grotesque actress who appeared in the Jester comedy IN THE WILD WEST ('19).

But now after having seen her on film and in photographs I've found that I was wrong. She was tall, pretty, very Rubenesque (proving it in SATURNINO FARANDOLA in a skin-tight diving outfit), and was not a character actress but his leading lady. She may have also have been his wife so it's possible that Nilde Barrachi, Babette Perez of the Eagle Films, and Nilde Babette of the Jester comedies are the same person, but none of the leading ladies in his American comedies that I've viewed were taller than him. What seems to be definite is that she appeared in his Italian films, joined him at some time in America, and either left films or returned to Europe by 1921.

Now just who was the eccentric comedienne from IN THE WILD WEST?

My thanks to Mike Abadi, Robert Arkus, Catherine Cormon, James Kotsilbas Davis, Rob Farr, Rich Finnegan, Sam Gil, Livio Jacob, Cole Johnson, Mark Johnson, Bruce Lawton, Hooman Mehran, Carlo Montanaro, Ben Model, Joe Moore, David Robinson, Steve Rydzewski, Brent Walker, and Madeline F. Matz and Rosemary Hanes at the Library of Congress. Special thanks to Elif Rongen-Kaynakci for her help, friendship, and common interest in all things Tweedy.



Marcel Fabre and Robinette. Photos courtesy Elif Rongen-Kaynakci.

What's New in Slapstick!

Our good friend Brent Walker writes us stating that Steve Massa has found a synopsis in the June 28th, 1924 *Moving Picture World* for the Educational Mermaid Comedy WEDDING SHOWERS that confirms that this is the film (excerpted as LA COURSE AU CHAREAU) in which Lige Conley is the newlywed son of Mack Swain who tries to retrieve an errant hat, not THIS WAY OUT as guessed in my article. Also, Sam Gill and Karl Thiede, who are working on a project on Fox Sunshine Comedies, have unearthed a credit for Lige in THE ROAMING BATH TUB, a two-reel comedy released December 21, 1919 by Fox. This comedy was directed by Frank C. Griffin, and stars Ethel Teare, Billy Franey, Ed Kennedy and Bobby Dunn. Lige's name is listed as "Lige Comley," giving him yet another spelling variant!

Since Brent mentioned it, our good friend Sam Gill, along with Karl Thiede, are planning to do all the silent Fox comedy shorts series in detailed filmographic form, with illustrations for as many of the films as we can find. It's quite a challenge, but fascinating.

Sam asks that "Anyone who would like to help with with photos, lobby cards, glass slides, poster images, or hard-to-find information (like credits tucked away in news items of the time or interviews with anyone later who ever worked there), would be most appreciated, and credit will be given to every person who helps. Thanks so much, Steve, and keep up that wonderful work you are doing with *Slapstick!* Your work is so important." If you can help, please get in touch with Sam at: albertthackett@hotmail.com or write us here at *Slapstick!* and your letters will be forwarded.

Our new friend Cathy Childs, whom by profession is an artist-animator of great talent, is busy at work on an illustrated biography of Raymond Hitchcock and an accompanying DVD of restored films and recordings. In addition to that, she's also working on a series of animated pictures "starring" Hitchy. If any readers have anything to share with Cathy, please email her at hitchy-koo@juno.com, or write us here at *Slapstick!* and your letters will be forwarded.

David Kiehn's *Broncho Billy and the Essanay Film Company* book has ran into a little delay but he informs us the tome will contain nearly 300 photos: scene stills, behind the scenes production photos, group pictures, portraits and candid shots. "I've found some amazing images, thanks mainly to the many relatives of Essanay personnel I was able to locate, plus Sam Gill, Bob Birchard, Marc Wanamaker and others who opened their collections to me. The story of Anderson's journey west with his western division will be covered in detail, thanks to a variety of sources, including movie trade magazines, newspaper accounts, interviews and personal papers. It will be a big surprise to most people how much information was out there to be found. I've been able to compile a comprehensive filmography, too, with nearly complete cast listings. There will also be capsule biographies of the 200 Essanay people who worked in the western division. Credit to the Essanay people for their work in motion pictures is long overdue, and I'm proud to get the chance to tell their story. I've enjoyed writing this book immensely, and remain fascinated by these people who embraced movies as a profession in this pioneering era and made it a remarkable time to be alive." We at *Slapstick!* can't wait any longer for this book! Best of luck, David! For more information, drop David an email at: farwellbks@earthlink.net or write us at *Slapstick!*

Steve Massa and his wife Susan had the privilege of attending Pordenone's annual film festival. He tells us "Pordenone was fantastic. We had a blast. The town of Sacile is beautiful, the food incredible, and you're with a crowd of people who are crazy about silent films. The American comedies that I saw were: HIS WIFE KNEW ABOUT IT - Mr. & Mrs. Sidney Drew; THE SMILE WINS ('23) - Paul Parrott; BREAKFAST AT SUNRISE - Constance Talmadge feature directed by Mal St Clair; OH MABEL BEHAVE - Sadly this was the bomb of the festival - a total dog. It was a large topic of discussion and about other bad films people would say 'Well, at least it was better than OH MABEL BEHAVE.' Mabel shows up for about ten minutes and the rest is Sterling and Sennett furiously mugging without a plot (and without any laughs). It was a beautiful restoration but yikes! David Robinson said that the

restoration wasn't quite finished when the schedule was set so he had to book it unseen. And he took a lot of heat for it.; THE PICTURE IDOL - Vitagraph with Clara Kimball Young & Maurice Costello; THE AGELESS SEX - another Vitagraph; THE LADY AND HER MAID - more Vitagraph comedy; STENOGRAPHER TROUBLES - John Bunny & Flora Finch; THE SOCIAL SECRETARY - early Norma Talmadge comedy written by Anita Loos & John Emerson; LADIES NIGHT IN A TURKISH BATH ('28) - This was the funniest film I saw, a great feature directed by Eddie Cline with Jimmy Finlayson in a wonderful supporting role. One of the hits of the festival.; STAGE STRUCK - Gloria Swanson; LE AVVENTURA STRAORDINARISSIMA DI SATURNINO FARANDOLA - Our pal Tweedy starred and directed this spoof of the Jules Verne - type of adventure / science fiction stories. Originally it was shown in four episodes but only this condensed feature version exists. It's a wonderful film (and a beautifully restored and tinted 35mm print) with all these crazy epic adventures all over the world. Tweedy plays the hero (who had been raised by monkeys on a tropical island) and Nilde Barrachi the heroine. There's one fantastic overseas adventure where Barrachi gets swallowed up by an incredible full-sized mechanical whale. Really well directed by Perez with huge sets and visuals like some of the classic German epics. (Be sure to see more about this film in Mr. Massa's article on pages 4-6); HELEN'S BABIES - Feature with Baby Peggy, Edward Everett Horton, & Clara Bow; A VITAGRAPH ROMANCE - Clara Kimball Young; DIZZY DADDIES - Roach short with Finlayson, Gertrude Astor, & Spec O'Donnell; FOOTLOOSE WIDOWS - Warners feature starring Louise Fazenda as the kind of goldigger the Joan Blondell would play in the talkies. Those are the new comedies. There were also many that I'd seen before like HEARTS AND FLOWERS, BATH TUB PERILS, CINDERELLA CINDERS, BEAUTY A LA MUD, HOLD YOUR BREATH, IT, ASK FATHER, EXIT SMILING, ROWDY ANN and many others. Actually there were about ten that I recommended, so next time I'm going to keep my mouth shut so I can see more new titles.

"We made a lot of new friends and actually spent some time having cappachino and chatting with David Robinson. Kevin Brownlow was there but I could never get up the courage to go and speak to him.

"There's good news on Mabel's HEAD OVER HEELS. John Allen, who's doing the restoration, got the print 2 days ago. From his initial examination he said it's in very good shape and is an excellent original to copy from. Now we have to work out details like how long the process will take, etc. I'm very relieved & happy that it's finally in his hands."

I wanted to give you some other info about lost comedies that have turned up in case you want to mention it. A friend at Eastman House recently told me that they have a 35mm nitrate print of the Arbuckle feature THE TRAVELING SALESMAN ('21) with German titles. And on 28mm they have: SOPHIE PICKS A DEAD ONE - A Snakeville comedy with Margaret Joslin, Victor Potel, Harry Todd, Carl Stockdale, and Harry Keenan; MR. JACK DUCKS ALIMONY - # 3 in the Vitagraph series THE ESCAPADES OF MR. JACK with Frank Daniels and Nelli Anderson; HER OBSESSION - a Metro Mr. & Mrs. Sidney Drew short; FOR ART'S SAKE - a 1918 Billie Rhodes Strand comedy; HER TERRIBLE TIME - another Billie Rhodes Strand; plus the Arbuckle short CAMPING OUT that the Nederlands is restoring with the Cineteca del Friuli, not to mention the stuff we've been helping Elif identify like A DYNAMITE DOGGIE with Al St John; ROUGH ON HUSBANDS a Century comedy with Eddie Barry, Merta Sterling and Harry Mann; GETTING GERTIE'S GOAT with Dorothy DeVore, Jimmie Harison, and Billy Bletcher, and many more. Maybe we could do some kind of listing of things that have turned up (call it "Restoration Round-Up" and have a picture of Polly Moran as Sheriff Nell roping something) I can check my notes from Elif as there's a lot more titles.

("Restoration Round-Up"?!? I do like the sound of it, Steve! - Editor) Ed Lee (the last of the Kentucky Buckshot's) advises us that copies of his Laurel and Hardy Ageography are still available and any and every fans collection is incomplete without this reference. For more information, see his ad in this issue or drop *Slapstick!* a line.

Letters

The Slapsticks were fantastic!!! Better researched than many books I've read on the subject. I must have read them ten times each since I've got them. I'll shortly be sending you a check to pre-order the next issues. I have ten times more respect more Ben Turpin now professionally and personally. The way he quit his career to tend to his ailing wife was quite touching. Being a dog person I could detect from the photograph that Ben's cross-eyed dog really loved him. Plus seeing Ben in mufti was unique to say the least. The Lige Conley filmography was a pleasant surprise. I have a Lloyd Hamilton filmography (not very good) that I have compiled over the last 25 years and found some of the titles I've had were actually Conley Mermaids. I have contacted Classic Images to get the Issue that had Mr. Robert's and Rob's so I'll finally get the definitive one if they have a copy left. Do you know if a Monty Banks filmography was published by Classic Images?

I've just recently moved to West Virginia from York PA where I lived several years. I looked high and low for silent film comedy materials in the York, Harrisburg, Lancaster, and Baltimore areas to no avail. I thought for sure I could find something in Baltimore. (I even made forays into the suburbs of Philadelphia, but you seem to have cleaned that area out!). I did find a Stogie still though. There were about a half a dozen times where at an estate sale or antique shop I would spy a silent film era can or two only to have my heart break when I picked it up to find out it was empty. Presently I have to go to Pittsburgh from time to time and I have driven down Forbes St. which was that town's film row. The Paramount office is there still (boarded up). Of course I have fantasized about break-ing into the building to see if there are any Griffith or Fields features just laying there waiting to be saved. In your last e-mail you asked if I had contacted any silent film persona in the 70's. When I was thirteen I obtained Hal Roach's phone number and just called him and to my surprise he answered the phone! He talked to me for 15 minutes. I even have a tape of the call. In my old age now I realize that this was rude but my passion was overwhelming. Later I found the number for a Daphne Pollard but the lady who answered said she wasn't her. I tried calling Jimmy Aubrey at the home he was in but the attendant told me they didn't forward calls to residents. Now I realize he probably wouldn't have taken the call anyway. Gotta run, looking forward to the next issue.

Tomnie

PS. I was watching Semon's **THE STUNTMAN** the other night and I detected Al St. John in a small role as second unit director. Also there was a fat boy actor at Educational with a similar name to mine, Tommy Hicks. He's Mark Jones' son in **FAMILY LIFE** and I just recently spotted him in Semon's **DOCTOR** shooting Larry in the butt with a slingshot. Do you think these identifications might be too minute to e-mail Ms. Sassen about for her filmography?

Tommie Hicks, Gay, West Virginia
homesteader@netburner.net

Dear Steve:

This might come under the heading of "local sightings." I was waiting to pick up a friend at the hospital yesterday who had had some outpatient status minor surgery done, when the television on the wall in her room burst forth with a several-second-shot of Lucille Carlisle! There as no mistaking her, as it was a black and white clip with her hair in a similar style to its appearance in the still from **THE SIMPLE LIFE** on page 19 of issue number six! She was striking an "Oh, my!" type of pose and attitude. The clip was shown again about a half-hour later, on a local Las Vegas station.

Since the sound was turned down very low on the television, I can only tell you that the commercial which included Lucille was some sort of "spot" for a well-known local attorney and TV personality, Ed Bernstein. At least somebody has good taste in selecting vintage clips!

Another nomination for a future article would be Leo White, whose career spanned over thirty years, and who worked in many comedy films besides the Chaplin's that he is best known for. Roll on issue number seven!

Best Wishes,

Cody Morgan
North Las Vegas, Nevada

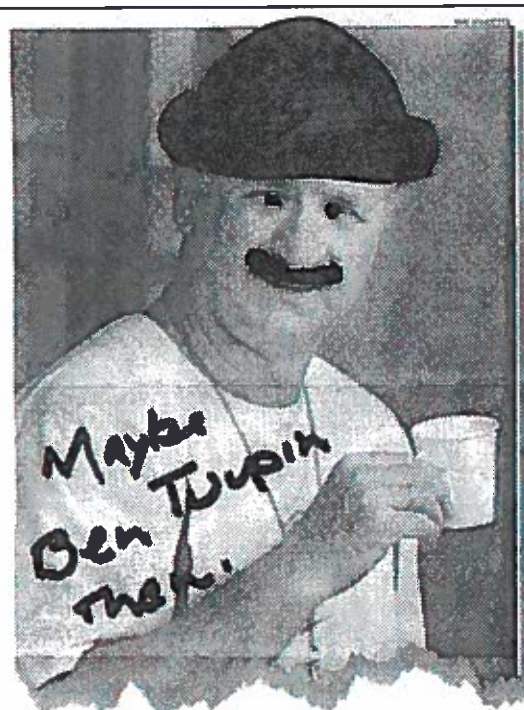
Hi Steve,

Many thanks for the latest Slapstick! magazine which is up to your usual high standards!

I enclose a recent newspaper article that may be of interest to you. Apparently someone thinks the coach of the Brazil soccer team bears a striking resemblance to Ben Turpin!

Best Regards,

Simon Myers
Middlesex, United Kingdom



Brazil coach in silent movie shock

PLEASE, please, Lord, let there be enough space in this week's column to realise the dream of Mr Clark, of Newcastle. He saw the Luiz Felipe Scolari photograph here a couple of weeks back above my piece bemoaning the exhausted soccer lookalikes industry and insisting that, despite reports, the Brazil boss actually looks nothing like the actor Gene Hackman. If anything, I argued, Scolari looks just like veteran Hollywood star Robert Loggia as he appeared in Brian De Palma's *Scarface*. Now Mr Clark wants to know if we have all gone quite mad. Using just a black felt-tip

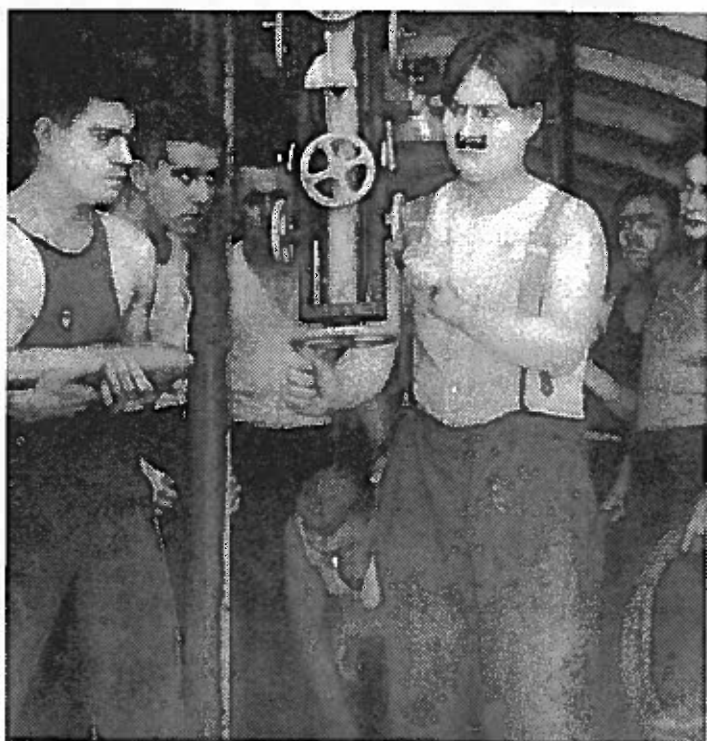


pen, he has, with but a few strokes, made us all see that Scolari is, in fact, the legitimate heir to the facial genius of silent star Ben Turpin. It really is quite startling, Mr Clark, and, of course, absolutely, almost dangerously funny. So, there may be life in the old library of lookalikes yet. Enjoy.

Harold Lloyd At Mack Sennett

An Incomplete Filmography

By Georges D'Acunto



Mack Sennett Triangle-Keystone

"A Submarine Pirate"

In Four Reels

Directed by

Charles Avery & Sydney Chaplin

Assisted by Grover Ligon

Cinematography by Roger Dale Armstrong

Supervised by Mack Sennett

Copyright December 26, 1915

Released November 24, 1915

French Title: *Le Sous-Marin Pirate*

- Cast -

Sydney Chaplin, Glen Cavender, Wesley Ruggles,

Phyllis Allen, Harold J. Binney, Fritz Schade,

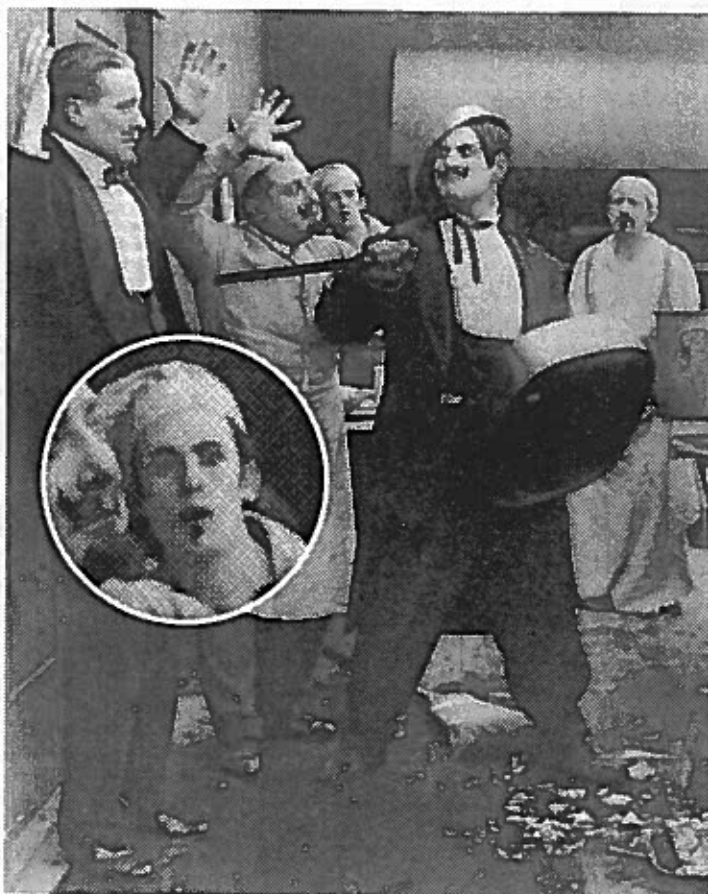
Billy Gilbert, Ted Edwards, Charles Lakin, Harold Lloyd

The filmography of Harold Lloyd includes more than 600 titles, and for historians of the motion picture, it is complex. It would have started at Edison in 1912, but no trace of its passage can confirm it. The first Lloyd appearances recorded by copyright at Edison date 1913.

It is also known that he worked for Mack Sennett in 1915 with eleven documented film titles.

Yet there is a film omitted from Lloyd's Sennett filmography, and in which he participated with out a doubt.

It is in this illustration, from Kalton C. Lahue and Sam Gill's Clown Princes and Court Jesters (shown below), a scene from *A Submarine Pirate*, that has permitted me to identify Harold Lloyd. While making an enlargement, we can see, enter Fritz Schade and Sydney Chaplin. A character in the distance, sporting a chef's hat and small goatee, is easily recognizable as Harold Lloyd. One more for the record.



Hal Haig Prieste

The Last Keystone Kop

By Michael Campino

When Hal Haig Prieste died at the age of 104 on April 19, 2001, his passing was reported in newspapers around the world. Prieste was the world's oldest Olympic champion, having won a bronze medal in platform diving at the 1920 Olympics in Antwerp, Belgium. While being presented with his medal by Belgium's King Albert, Prieste did a pratfall which brought a smile to the Monarch's face. The Olympic flag flying high above caught Prieste's eye.

As he later would say, "When I saw it, I had to go home with it." On a dare from his teammate, the legendary Hawaiian swimming champion Duke Kahanamoku, Prieste shimmied up a 15 foot flag pole in the middle of the Olympic stadium just after the closing ceremonies and took the Olympic flag, one of the first to feature the now familiar five interlocking rings.

Making use of the sleight of hand skills he would later perfect in vaudeville, Prieste managed to keep the flag hidden while being searched by the police, who never found it. The flag remained a personal memento of the games for the next eighty

years, somehow surviving the fire which destroyed almost everything in Prieste's West Philadelphia apartment in 1971.

The fate of the historic flag was a mystery and it was considered to be lost. Prieste discovered the importance of his souvenir during a 1997 interview at an Olympic dinner event when a reporter told him how the original Olympic flag vanished and never located since the 1920 games.

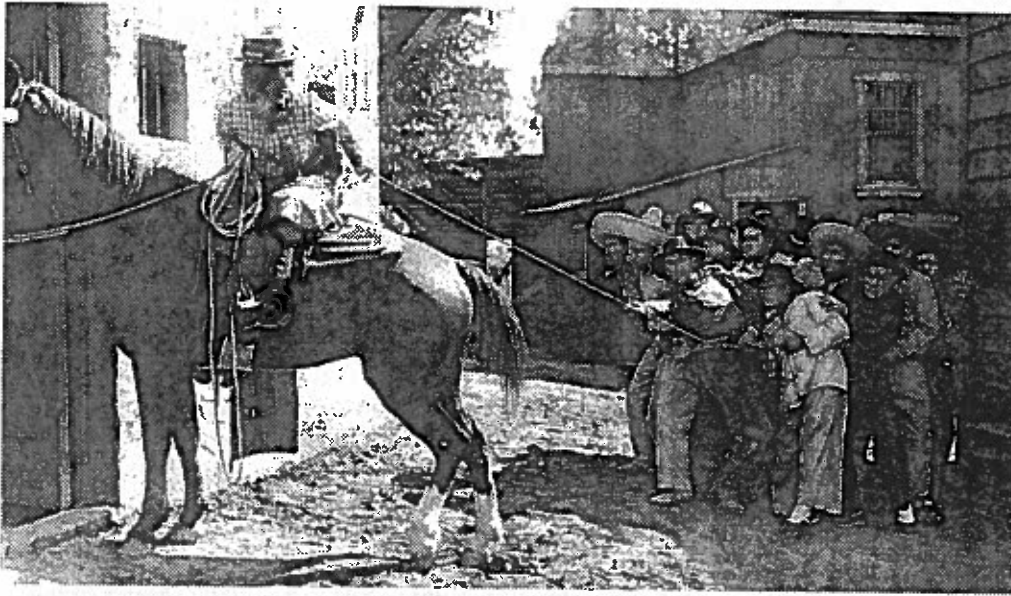
Prieste showed the flag to his podiatrist and close friend Dr. Nicholas LaMaina, who convinced Hal that the flag would be of great interest to the International Olympic Committee.

Dr. La Maina and his wife contacted the IOC who were thrilled to learn the flag still existed. The IOC sponsored a trip for Hal, and flew the three of them as guests to Sydney, Australia, at the start of the 2000 Olympic games.

During the Olympic Committee's opening session, Prieste returned his long time souvenir to IOC Chairman Juan Antonio Samaranch. In attendance was the grandson of King Albert,

Mack Sennett players hard at work in Are Waitresses Safe? Hal Haig Prieste far left (see inset) along with Ben Turpin, Louise Fazenda, Slim Summerville, Tom Kennedy, Cliff Bowes, Al McKinnon, Tony O'Sullivan, Albert Gillespie, Phyllis Haver, Vera Steadman, and others.





Sheriff Nell (Polly Moran) lassoes a bunch of ruffians including Frank J. Coleman, Charlie (Lynn) Conklin, and Hal (as the Chinaman), in Sheriff Nell's Tussle.

the Belgian monarch who had given Prieste his bronze medal eighty years earlier. "It was no good to me – I won't be able to hang it up in my room. People will think more of me for giving it away than keeping it," he told the assembled crowd upon handing the flag to Samaranch.

Hal stayed in Sydney for ten days. He attended the opening ceremonies and went to several receptions, meeting both Chelsea Clinton and Prince Albert of Monaco. A ball was thrown in Prieste's honor by the Armenian delegation, the final tribute to a man whose career as an entertainer went back to the days of silent movies.

Hal's career in films only rated a brief mention in his obituary. It stated only that he had once been a Keystone Kop, counted Charlie Chaplin among his friends, and had been in about 25 silent movies.

What the obituary failed to mention was that Hal Haig Prieste was the last Keystone Kop, perhaps even the last surviving person to have worked for Mack Sennett at Keystone. Hal's career in show business was almost as amazing as his Olympic exploits.

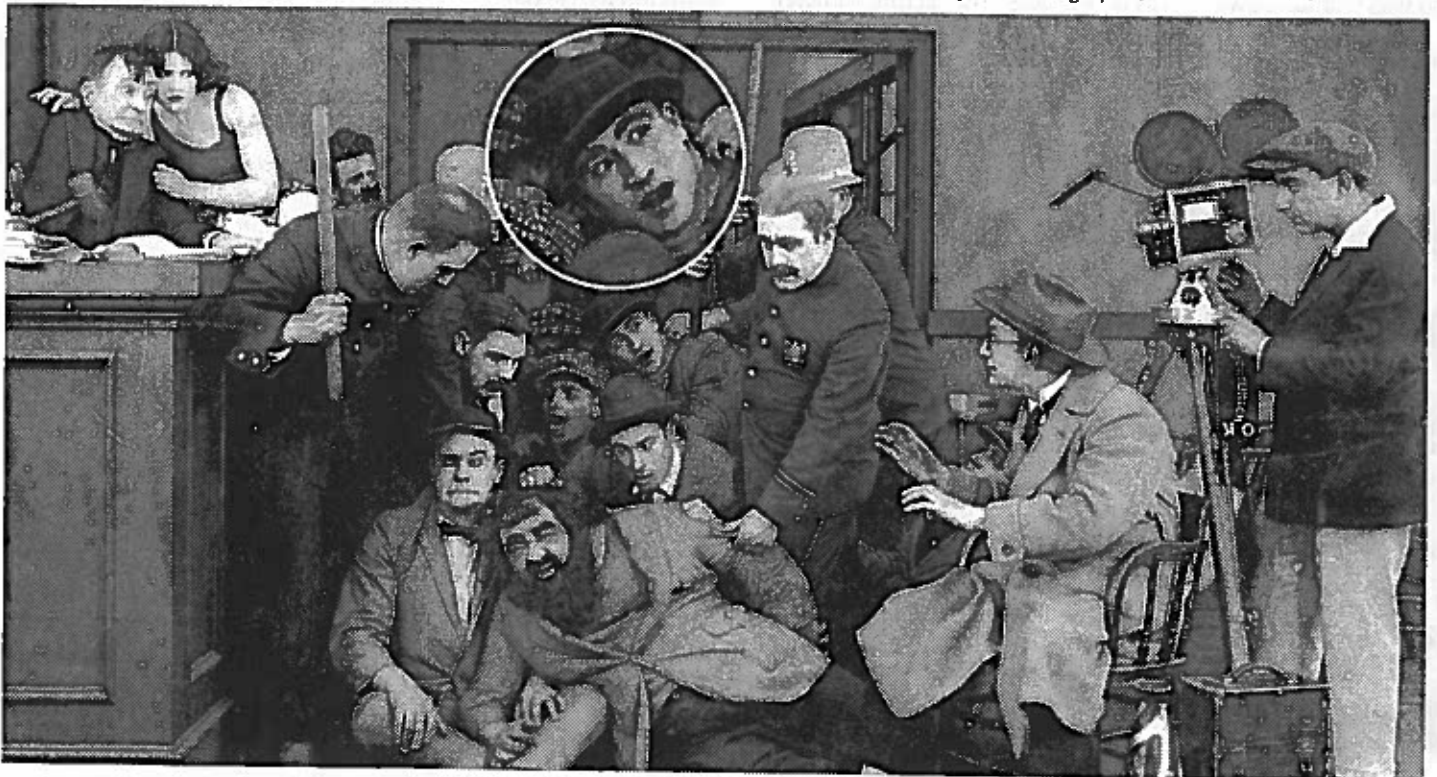
Born in Fresno, California on November 23, 1896, Hal started life as Haig Keshishian. His parents, Mark and Haiganoosh Keshishian were Armenians who

fled the Turks early in 1896. Prieste's father was forced to disguise himself as a woman in order to escape. The Turks were letting only women and children leave the country and Hal's mother was pregnant with him.

"The Turks were killing," Prieste recalled in an interview a few months before his death. "They were Mohammedans and we were Christians; it was too dangerous, and my parents decided to come to America."

The family first settled in Fresno but moved to Long Beach, California a few years later. The proximity of the ocean was to

Sennett players caught in a police station melee, possibly from Down On the Farm. Hal Haig Prieste in the center of it all (see inset) along with Charlie Murray, Marie Prevost, Kalla Pasha, Eddie Gribbon, James Finlayson, John Rand and real-life cinematographer, Victor Scheurich.



shape Hal's destiny. He took to the water at an early age and became an expert swimmer. By the age of eight, he had become a Life Guard mascot and was taking part in rescues.

Diving for pennies at a nearby naval base was both a pastime and source of income for many of the older boys. Hal's diving abilities and knack for acrobatic stunts led him to the base, where he soon was earning more applause and money than his fellow divers. The show biz bug had bitten Hal and he began to think of a career as an entertainer.

A few years later, Mack Sennett happened to see Prieste diving while on a visit to Long Beach. "I fooled around with him and did a couple tricks," Hal recalled. Sennett was impressed and advised him to try his luck in Hollywood. Soon after, Hal moved to Los Angeles, where he changed his name to Haig Prieste. One of his first screen appearances was as a spear carrier in the Babylonian sequence of D.W. Griffith's epic *Intolerance*. Shortly after his arrival in Los Angeles, Hal joined the Los Angeles Athletic Club where he met Charlie Chaplin and renewed his acquaintance with Mack Sennett. Chaplin and Sennett were members of the Club and both were impressed with Hal's athletic ability.

Remembering Hal from Long Beach, Sennett started Prieste off as a stunt man and double. Because of his short height (5'4"), he was used as a double for many of the females on the Keystone lot, as well as the male comics. Prieste frequently used to stand in for Chester Conklin, who remained a life-long friend. One of Hal's most treasured possessions was one of Conklin's famous trademark walrus mustaches.

"One of the best stunts was shot for a Chester Conklin movie," Hal recalled. "He was cranking an old Model T in one scene, when a billy goat bent on business came running up behind with his head down and horns ready for action. Conklin was well out of the way when the goat got there, you can bet. And who was cranking away in his place? Me! The picture showed

me sailing through the air, over the car. And who picked himself up from the ground? Conklin! Even with padding, a goat hurts!"

Having survived his encounter with the goat, Hal began getting work as an extra, and finally as a Keystone Kop. He had fond memories of his experiences as a member of the Keystone Kops and would break into laughter when sharing his stories about "the old days."

The Keystone patrol wagon "looked as if we were going 50 miles an hour. Actually, we were going about 5 to 10 miles an hour. But the scenes showing the car hanging over the cliff – they were real! The car was held by a piano wire, strong enough to hold a locomotive. But if it ever got a kink in it, we'd have gone over the cliff for sure! You had to be an athlete in those pictures. Sometimes we took two or three suits with us and they'd all end up in tatters."

"We'd come back from a day of shooting and our clothes would be in tatters. It was a good living in those days though. Ford Sterling, the idea man – he was the guy with the goatee – earned \$75 or \$100 a week. The rest of us made about \$25 a week, and an extra \$5 for an idea. I remember one time I got \$5 for suggesting we use roman candles for guns. Then I was allowed to wear asbestos padding while someone shot me!"

Hal recalled an afternoon when the Kops were on their way to film on location. Racing down the streets of Los Angeles in the patrol car, firing their guns off wildly the entire time, they "scared the daylights out of people! They didn't know what was going on! You should have seen people run!"

Around 1917, Sennett began to use Prieste as a double for many of his female stars. He found himself tied to the train tracks while doubling for Gloria Swanson in *Teddy At The Throttle*, and he rode the race horse to victory dressed as Mabel Normand in *Mickey*.

Hal on drums along with his Navy buddies, 1919.



Ben Turpin joined the Keystone ranks in March 1917 and was teamed with Polly Moran in a number of films over the next year. Hal was often assigned to this unit, working as both an extra and stunt double for both Turpin and Polly Moran in *Roping Her Romeo* and a number of the Cactus Nell films.

The summer of 1918 found the United States playing a major role in World War I. Patriotism was at an all time high and Hal decided to enlist. The Moving Picture World of August 3, 1918 reported that "John Hays and Haig Prieste, Mack Sennett comedians, have enlisted in the submarine service." Assigned to the submarine base at San

Pedro, California, Hal's diving skills saved his life when a test torpedo that was intended to pass his life boat veered off course and scored a direct hit.

Luckily the war was winding down and Hal was honorably discharged from the Navy on September 27, 1919. He returned to Hollywood and resumed his film career until the summer of 1920 and the Olympics.

After his Olympic victory in Belgium, Prieste toured Europe and the United States as a member of an all-star swimming and diving team. In 1921 Hal traveled to Hawaii to visit with Duke Kahanamoku. While there, Prieste competed in and won the Hawaiian diving championship. He also was taught to surf by the great Kahanamoku himself.

Hal's return to America was noted in the local papers. It was reported that "The diving champion plans to re-enter motion picture work in the Sennett arena or on the Lehrman lot where he shook the slapstick and did tumbling and trick bicycle riding in many of the comedy films from the two studios."

Prieste's last film appearance of note was in the 1923 Harold Lloyd comedy *Why Worry?* Hal played a Mexican revolutionary, for which he was required to grow a beard. The beard was responsible for placing Hal in several humorous situations. He recalled: "Here's a funny story for you. I once had to grow a beard for four months while making a Harold Lloyd picture. After I had a three months' growth, a national championship in diving came along, and I was forced to compete with the beard. I had the entire sentiments of the crowd with me, for they thought me an old man competing against youngsters. And I was little over 21 at the time!"

During the filming of *Why Worry?*, Hal and two other bearded actors went to lunch one day while still in costume. He recalled: "People saw us and were afraid. They thought we were Bolsheviks – there was a great fear of Russia at that time. People in the restaurant thought we were anarchists, there to blow up the building! The place cleared out fast!"

When asked to compare Charlie Chaplin with Harold Lloyd, Prieste replied that Charlie Chaplin was the greatest comedian he had ever met. He explained, "You take Harold Lloyd, he wasn't a funny man. He needed writers to create funny situations for him. Chaplin created his own comedy. In the middle of shooting, he'd go for a walk all by himself. Then he'd come back and say, 'I've got it!' They'd shoot the funny scene. But he needed quiet to think it out."

After completing *Why Worry?*, Prieste left the movies and began his long career as a professional entertainer. He changed his name once again, to Hal Haig, while continuing to use the name Haig Prieste for swimming and diving events. One of his first gigs was with the Barnum and Bailey Circus as an acrobat and tumbler. In 1924, he tried burlesque, but did not like it and found work on the Keith circuit, where he performed as a comedian, magician, dancer and pantomime artist.

By the late 1920's Prieste's name was up in lights as the headliner at places such as the Strand Roof Cascades on Broadway in New York city. Not long after, he met and married Hazel Stoner, who remained by his side until her death in 1981. For almost fifty years, Hal continued to entertain people with antics like the broom ballet and the cigarette juggling act.

"Retiring" in Philadelphia in the early 1970's, Hal began ice skating at the Penn Center Ice Skating Rink, just to get out and keep in shape. Soon he was performing many of his old routines on ice. Crowds began coming to see him and he was asked to perform his act between periods of the University of Pennsylvania hockey games.

In the late 1970's, Prieste began ice skating at the Coliseum in Voorhees, New Jersey. The NHL Philadelphia Flyers used the facility for workouts and took notice of Hal. He was invited to perform before their practice games and did so up until he was past 90 years of age!

Riding an exercise bike every day, Hal never gave up making plans for his next show biz comeback. As he stated in a 1993 interview: "I have had an unusual career. The truth is, I just don't know how to quit at something. You've got to keep yourself active. Boredom will kill you quicker than anything else."

Author's Note:

I would like to thank Alfreda Haas for the friendship and generosity which made this article possible. During the last decade of Hal's life, his vision and hearing began to fail. Alfreda took care of Hal's needs, often acting as his eyes and ears. For many years Alfreda opened her home to my family, my friends, and myself as a place to sit and visit with Hal in comfort. A buffet lunch always served as the catalyst for many hours of fascinating conversation with Hal. Her hospitality brought us together and words cannot express my gratitude.

HAL HAIG
ARTISTE COMIQUE!!!

Weird! Wacky!

A Fabulous Fantastic Fella
INTERNATIONAL PANTOMIME STAR • FORMER OLYMPIC CHAMP

Shows: 77
at various times
Grand Oldest Show
Book: 1919-1920

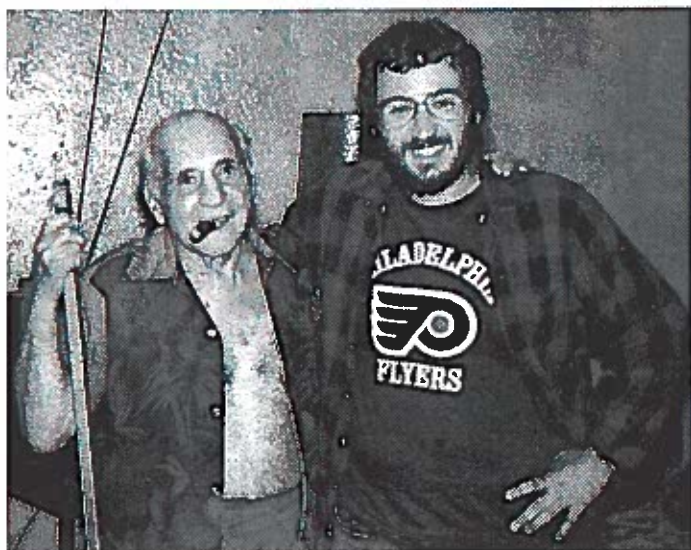
Specialties: 77
at various times
Grand Oldest Show
Book: 1919-1920

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at various times
Grand Oldest Show
Book: 1919-1920

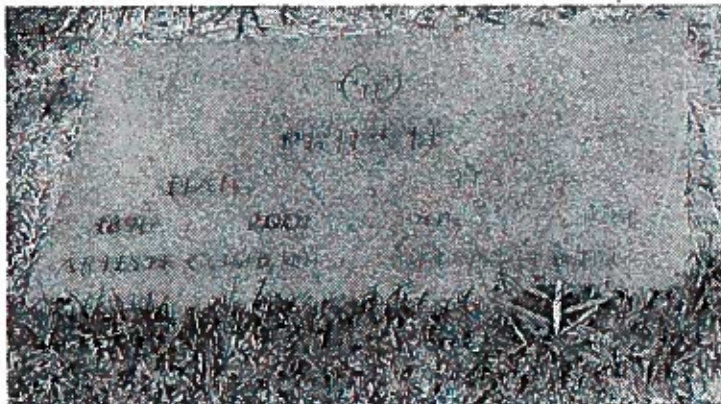


Photos of Hal Prieste courtesy the collection of the author, Michael Campino.

Clockwise from top left: Hal was still performing his hockey stick routine into his late 90's; Calvert Sims displays the infamous Olympic flag taken by Hal at the 1920 Olympic Games; *above:* Hal doing one of his vaudeville bits in 1987 at the age of 90; *left:* Hal shares a moment with the author and his two daughters, Cynthia and Jocelyn, in the summer of 1995; *bottom left:* Hal with author Michael Campino at his West Philadelphia home in 1987; *bottom right:* Hal's final place of rest, Inglewood Park Cemetery, in Los Angeles, California.



SlapStick!



Exclusively for Readers of Slapstick Frame Enlargements from the Rediscovered Semon Comedies

By Claudia Sassen

Readers of Slapstick will recall from issue #5 that several Semon films were rediscovered at the Nederlands Filmmuseum last year. Now we are back with the first frame blow ups from the nitrate copies of THE HEAD WAITER and A JEALOUS GUY. The films await restoration, but no sooner will undergo this process than it is clear whether any other missing parts can be found. As there is still a massive amount of uninspected cans from the same collection,

chances to eventually fill the gaps are quite possible. Hopes have further grown since only recently another clip from THE HEAD WAITER resurfaced.

All enlargements are from the Nederlands Filmmuseum with their kind permission. Special thanks to Elif Rongen-Kaynakci for grabbing the pictures from the nitrate material and for letting me view their Semon films.



THE HEADWAITER: An opening sequence: Larry and Oliver Hardy fishing for a sausage. Hardy will end up being sleeveless.



Blame it on the beautiful cabaret dancers! Only a few seconds later and the distracted Larry will have decorated Phyllis Allen's dress with spaghetti. This is obviously one of the scenes that disqualified THE HEAD WAITER from being shown to German children and teenagers of the 1920s (cf. German censorship cards).

A JEALOUS GUY: A phone call that changes everything. Larry does not seem to be the only one who loves his wife. From this frame enlargement the bad condition of the nitrate material is only too obvious.



A JEALOUS GUY: Nuptial bliss: Larry Semon, here acting under the pseudonym of Billy Baxter, and his beloved wife (Jewell Hunt).

TED EDWARDS & CHARLES LAKIN



A Tale of Two Forgotten Keystone Players



By Brent Walker

Illustrations courtesy the author

During the years 1912 to 1915, Mack Sennett's Keystone Film Company was one of the very few major film companies who continued the early practice of not issuing credits identifying the names of the players in its films. Because of their popularity, audiences got to know the greatest Keystone stars – Fatty, Mabel and Charlie – by their first names, while probably recognizing others – such as Ambrose, Droppington and Hogan – more by their nicknames than their real names (Mack Swain, Chester Conklin and Charlie Murray), at least initially. Supporting the stars was an overwhelming array of talent whose names became known when they left Keystone and found success elsewhere in comedy shorts (Alice Howell, Charley Chase, Rube Miller) or as dramatic players (Josef Swickard, Wallace MacDonald). Then there were those who did bits, stuntwork, and were archetypal "Keystone Cops," some of whom we know because they remained busy in the film industry for years as property men and bit players (i.e. the "Non-Sneezing" Billy Gilbert, Grover Ligon and Joe Bordeaux). However, there are also those whose faces are familiar to chronic viewers of Keystone comedies, but whose names are forgotten, largely because they appeared to have left the film industry or otherwise "disappeared" – not long after leaving Keystone.

This is the tale of two such men, both of whom seemingly could have remained in the film industry, milking their past as "former Keystone Cops," but didn't – either by choice or by happenstance. One of these men – Ted Edwards – is a name known to researchers, but has never had a face put to his name in print form. The other – Charles Lakin – is someone so forgotten that, as far as I know, his first and last names are being placed together in a historical film context for the very first time right here in this article.

Ted Edwards

Never has a film actor received so much publicity (apparently self-generated) and yet remained so anonymous at the same time as Ted Edwards. Beginning in 1916, Motion Picture News began publishing its annual and semi-annual Studio Directory, an invaluable reference source featuring detailed biographies of hundreds of then current (and later forgotten) film personnel. Ted Edwards had an entry in every issue beginning with January 29, 1916, citing his 2 1/2 years as a player of comedy characters at Keystone, and giving three specific film credits, all Keystones from 1915: FATTY'S FATAL (sic - FAITHFUL) FIDO, FATTY'S WRECKLESS (sic - RECKLESS) FLING and A SUBMARINE PIRATE. And later, when he died on September 29, 1945, Variety ran an obituary for this "Ted Edwards," giving his real name as M.E. Burrell, and credited him as one of the original Keystone Cops (which put him at the cutting edge of a claim – "original Keystone Cop" – that would be second only to those proclaiming

themselves former Our Gang members). Yet despite these shards of public notice over the course of a near 30-year period, there remains no known reference source that has ever identified an individual in a still photograph, frame blow-up or other image as "Ted Edwards."

The key to the identity of Ted Edwards would seem to be the three film credits listed in the 1916 Studio Directory. And a couple years ago, when I joined Phil Posner and Steve Rydzewski in a round-table attempt to identify all players in Charlie Chaplin's Keystone films, we were working from the loose (and since proven incorrect) assumption that Ted Edwards was the slightly built comic with black hair, unusually prominent eyebrows that almost seemed to droop down the outsides of his face, and strangely-sunken eyes who played the coat check man in FATTY'S FAITHFUL FIDO who is enlisted by Al St. John to hire two thugs to have Fatty Arbuckle "thoroughly choked." This same actor-whom I had taken to calling the "Funny Eyebrow Guy" – is the caveman misidentified as Al St. John in a still from HIS PREHISTORIC PAST on p.79 of The Films of Charlie Chaplin by McDonald, Conway and Ricci, and can be seen peeping out between two women at the center of the still from NO ONE TO GUIDE HIM on p.92 of Kops and Custards by Kaiton C. Lahue and Terry Brewer. This same actor pops up in a number of 1914-15 Keystone-Mutuals, occasionally as cops and Jewish stereotypes (with stubble and derby hat). I then viewed A SUBMARINE PIRATE (another of the Studio Directory's Ted Edwards credits), and sure enough, there was the same actor playing the desk clerk at the beginning of the film. The third credit, FATTY'S RECKLESS FLING, was unavailable to me at the time. However, a little later, I finally did see FATTY'S RECKLESS FLING and a "red flag" went up: there was no "Funny Eyebrow Guy" to be seen!

Though the Studio Directory credits sometimes need to be taken with a grain of salt, I decided to return to Ted Edwards' 1916 bio for a more thorough appraisal. Among the other details were that he was born in Sheffield, England, on May 9, 1884, and educated there. He spent 5 years on the stage in stock playing comedy and in vaudeville, spending one season with Joseph E. Howard. All of this really told me nothing (the man with the funny eyebrows could have been born in 1884, could have been English, and certainly could have been a vaudevillian). However, there was more information that I had overlooked before: "all around athlete, physical culture director in England and Canada, 5'8" tall, 150 lbs., light hair, gray eyes." The person we had been considering as "Ted Edwards" had very dark hair and dark eyes, and based on his gaunt appearance it would be hard to consider him an "all around athlete and physical culture director." And in FATTY'S FAITHFUL FIDO, he stands side by side with Al St. John – who is 5'8" and 140 lbs. by most accounts – and appears to be about 2 inches shorter than Al, which would make him around

5'6". And if anything, he would appear to be lighter than St. John, not 10 pounds heavier! This would seem to eliminate this actor as "Ted Edwards."

Meanwhile, one of the top people on my "Keystone unidentified" list had been an actor I took to calling "The Minister Guy," because he played ministers (often with gray "old man" sideburns) in the 1915 Keystones *MABEL AND FATTY'S SIMPLE LIFE*, *HEARTS AND PLANETS* and *WHEN LOVE TOOK WINGS*. He also played cops in a number of Keystones, including *THE LOVE THIEF*, *FATTY'S JONAH DAY* and *GUSSLE THE GOLFER* from 1914, and *PEANUTS AND BULLETS* and *THAT SPRINGTIME FEELING* from 1915. And – checking against the Studio Directory credits – he can be seen in all three titles: *FATTY'S FAITHFUL FIDO*, *FATTY'S RECKLESS FLING* and *A SUBMARINE PIRATE*. In the first, he's one of the gymnasium club members; in the second he's the card player closest to the door in the poker game Fatty enters; and he's in *A SUBMARINE PIRATE*, but just barely. He's a waiter in the far background in the restaurant scene with Syd Chaplin (not the more prominent tall blonde waiter in the kitchen scenes, but one working the back of the room).

"The Minister Guy" made several films with Charlie Chaplin. He's the diner with white shoes sitting at the end of the counter in the café scene of *HISTRYSING PLACE*. He's a mustachioed bystander who is knocked over – along with Mack Swain and cop Glen Cavender – when Chester Conklin is kicked by Charlie Chaplin in *GENTLEMEN OF NERVE* (he can be seen in clips from both films excerpted in *WHEN COMEDY WAS KING*). He also plays a waiter in the first restaurant scene where Marie Dressler's title character gets drunk in *TILLIE'S PUNCTURED ROMANCE*. (Wearing a handlebar mustache, he stands in the back right-of-frame initially, and later is one of the waiters who rousts Tillie out of her seat.)

And this – along with the following details – have made me virtually positive that this "Minister Guy" is Ted Edwards. So let's get to the physical characteristics. He has very blonde hair, which of course, fits the Studio Directory "light hair" description. And when he stands next to Al St. John (as he does in a number of films) he appears to be the same height and slightly stockier, which would fit perfectly with their respective measurements (both 5'8", St. John 140 lbs. and Edwards 150 lbs.). What's more, in *FATTY'S FAITHFUL FIDO*, he is the only gymnasium denizen wearing a tank top and revealing his muscles, and at one point he starts to use the gymnastic rings. Certainly befitting an "all around athlete" and "physical culture director."

So all signs point to this person being Ted Edwards, short of an actual photographic confirmation. In the script files of the Sennett collection at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, there is only one mention of Ted Edwards. This is as a customer in the Keystone-Triangle film *HIS LYING HEART* (1916). Unfortunately, this film is believed lost, and existing stills do not show the barber-shop scene in which he would appear. And of all the major books on Keystone, I've found him pictured only twice: in a frame blow-up from *HEARTS AND PLANETS* that appears on page 90 of Lahue's *Mack Sennett's Keystone* (wearing his "Minster Guy" regalia), and on page 71 of *The Films of Charlie Chaplin* in the grandstand shot from *GENTLEMEN OF NERVE* (one of his two roles in the film). He's the man sitting in the grandstands with a bow tie, upper row second to the right. (Recently, Chaplin/Keystone expert Bo Berglund told me that –



Above and below, Fatty Arbuckle and Ted Edwards in Fatty's Reckless Fling (1915).

independently – he had also identified the same man as Ted Edwards.)

In print at least, a great deal of information can be garnered about "Ted Edwards" later years. His Los Angeles Times obituary on October 1, 1945, reads mostly like the Variety one mentioned earlier, but adds some information. It says that M.E. Burrell died at his home at 121 W. Emerson Avenue in Monterey Park, a neighborhood community just east of Los Angeles. It also mentions that he entered business as a carpenter and building contractor, and had resided there for 23 years. A similar obituary in what would have been his most "local" paper, the *Alhambra Post Advocate* from neighboring Alhambra, pretty much tells the same story. A death notice in the Alhambra paper reveals that his name was Maurice E. Burrell, and mentions that he was survived by his son, Maurice R. Burrell, two grandchildren, and four sisters and three brothers who were all still residing in England.

Through research, I have turned up the following additional information about Maurice Edward Burrell (his screen first and last names appear to be both derived from his middle name – Ted being a frequent nickname for Edward, a la Ted Kennedy) in addition to that already outlined in his Studio Directory bio. First, he was born on





Marie Dressler with Ted Edwards directly above her in Tillie's Punctured Romance (1914). Others in scene include Glen Cavender, Fritz Schade, Chester Conklin & Charles Bennett.



Edwards and Lakin together as Keystone Cops. L-R: Frank Hayes (Chief), Charles Lakin, Joe Bordeaux, Grover Ligon and Ted Edwards in Fatty's Tin-Type Tangle (1915).

May 9, 1883, not 1884. The latest Keystone appearance I could find visually was 1917's *THIRST* (in which he plays a boarder washing the floor of Eva Thatcher's boarding house). He is credited on casting sheets as being in Charlie Chaplin's *A DOG'S LIFE* (1918) playing one of the unemployed men – presuming it is the same Ted Edwards. And though he is definitely not one of the five or six initial actors who are highly visible in this scene, he does possibly resemble one of the men who rather hurriedly race to the unemployment window at the end of this sequence (and whose faces are blurry even when viewed on DVD). This is the last known film appearance of "Ted Edwards" (the Ted Edwards who appeared in Dwain Esper's exploitation "classic" *MANIAC* in 1934 is a different person). Despite his later obituaries referring to him as "Ted Edwards," it is likely that for the rest of his life he was known only by his real name, Maurice (or Morrie) Burrell. It is also apparent that Burrell quickly left the film business.

Often, a person's activities in a certain city can be somewhat tracked

by consulting the local city directories. However, this is not foolproof, especially if the person was an itinerant vaudevillian who never sought a permanent address in Los Angeles while working in pictures, or if the person resided in neighboring incorporated cities such as Glendale, Burbank or Culver City. And indeed, during the years 1914-1919, there is no Maurice E. Burrell (or "Ted Edwards" for that matter) in the Los Angeles City Directory (and I have not checked other local Los Angeles County city directories during that period). Being an athlete, he also might have resided at the Los Angeles Athletic Club, although LAAC was noted as Mack Sennett's address in the City Directory for much of the teens. Finally, in 1920, there is a listing for Maurice E. Burrell at 1350 W. 4th street. His occupation was given as carpenter.

What prompted Burrell's quick career change from actor to carpenter? There are a few obvious clues. Burrell had married Teresa M. Sweeney (born 10/22/1883, died 7/31/1958), and on August 11, 1919, she gave birth to a son, Maurice Randolph Burrell. Perhaps Burrell decided that the unpredictable life of a bit actor was not secure enough for someone raising a child. Or perhaps Burrell had already started on his trade as a carpenter years before. It might even be possible that he was working in the Keystone carpenter shop in addition to accepting bit roles in the films. Interestingly, in the 1921 City Directory he is living at the same address, but his occupation is given as "photoplayer"! Did Burrell get another acting assignment in the year 1920, or did he give himself one last chance to realize his dream before settling down once and for all to a trade? In the 1922 Directory, still at 1350 W. 4th, he is listed as Morris E. Burrell, and again his trade is given as carpenter. In the 1923 City Directory, he is gone.

And here we pick up his trail in Monterey Park, where he moved to what would become his longtime residence at 121 W. Emerson Avenue. He apparently operated a carpentry shop behind his house, at 121 W. Emerson, for the next two decades (the 23 years alluded to by the Times obituary). After Burrell died on September 29, 1945, his son Maurice R. Burrell apparently took over his trade. A man at the Monterey Park Historical Museum, who had lived in Monterey Park all his life, remembered encountering "Morrie Burrell" (the son)



Fatty's Faithful Fido (1915) Ted Edwards (tank top) and Charles Lakin (striped tie) below rings.

in the early 1960's, and recalled him as a freelance contractor who drove around in a well-used pickup truck with his son (who would presumably be the grandson of "Ted Edwards"). However, he knew nothing about Burrell's father, his stint in films, or anything else, and the frame captures I showed him of Ted Edwards didn't ring a bell with him one way or the other as far as father resembling son. The son died on May 19, 1992, and both father and son are buried in a plot at Rose Hills Memorial Park in Whittier, California. Today there is a joint headstone marking the burial places of Maurice Edward Burrell, "Our Beloved Granddad," and his son, Maurice Randolph Burrell, "Our Beloved Dad." So far, I have been unsuccessful in reaching the grandchildren or relatives of Maurice E. Burrell.

Charles Lakin

So, now you know more about Maurice "Ted Edwards" Burrell than you probably ever wanted to know, and are now asking the obvious next question: "So who is that Funny Eyebrow Guy any-way?" I'm glad you asked, because therein lies a tale even more shrouded in mystery than Ted Edwards. Nothing about Ted Edwards' on-screen countenance during 1914-17 ever screams the word "comedian." He is a supporting player, or bit player, pure and simple. However, the "Funny Eyebrow Guy" is quite definitely a comedian, with probable vaudeville experience, though he never received anything resembling a starring role at Keystone.

The first clue to his identity was a very simple one, and one that I admit I had overlooked for quite some time. On p.306 of Mack Sennett's Keystone by Kalton C. Lahue in the continuity from A SUBMARINE PIRATE, the action mentions that Phyllis Allen "...exits to desk, where she swings at Syd [Chaplin] with her umbrella, missing him and hitting Lakin." Lakin! This is the desk clerk at the hotel, played by the "Funny Eyebrow Guy." And in viewing A SUBMARINE PIRATE, this synopsis describes every action in the sequence to a "T". Furthermore, continuity for CROOKED TO THE END (1915) and BECAUSE HE LOVED HER (1916) both mention this "Lakin" (no first name ever given) in their action. BECAUSE HE LOVED HER is also available for viewing and sure enough, there is that funny-eyebrowed comic as one of the three chefs (along with star Sam Bernard and Harry McCoy).

Meanwhile, I stumbled onto the following blurb in an August 5, 1914, issue of Photoplayers Weekly:

Charles Larkin, formerly with the "Social Maids" and late of the Keystone company, will soon be seen at the Hippodrome Theatre with Jean Gorman's "Happy Youngsters." Good luck to you Charlie.

"Larkin" is not "Lakin," but it sure is close, and the "r" could be a typo. And it seemed to dredge something up in the back of my mind about a "Charles Lakin." Where had I seen that name before? The funny-eyebrowed guy could be seen in films such as THE KNOCKOUT (released June 11, 1914) and THE PROPERTY MAN (August 1, 1914), then does not pop up in any existing Keystone films to my knowledge until HIS PREHISTORIC PAST (December 7, 1914). After that he returns with a vengeance, and can be seen in many Keystone-Mutual and Keystone-Triangle comedies of 1915. This could certainly signify a brief two or three month return to stage work at the Hippodrome (location not specified – and there was such a theater in Los Angeles, New York and London, among others) beginning in early August. (I did find mention of a burlesque show



Fatty's Faithful Fido (1915) Charles Lakin and Al St. John

called "Social Maids" playing the Gayety Theater in Kansas City in 1912, produced by Hurtig and Seamon, the entrepreneurs who built what eventually became known as Harlem's Apollo Theater).

But the name "Charles Lakin" continued to haunt me, until one day a light bulb popped in my head. I dug out some notes I had made from the Hal Roach/Rolin payroll records housed at the University of Southern California. Sure enough, there on the payroll at \$5 a day for the Harold Lloyd "glasses" one-reeler PINCHED (prod. # L-2) during the weeks ending June 29 and July 7, 1917, is "Charles Lakin." And I just happened to have a so-so quality VHS copy of PINCHED. I popped in the tape, and right there, near the beginning, was our boy – the dark-haired guy with the funny eyebrows – combining two of his Keystone characters as a high-hatted cop with "Jewish" stereotypical stubble. Well this almost certainly cleared up who Charles Lakin was: somebody who started at Keystone in 1914, left



Charles Lakin in Mabel and Fatty's Married Life (1915).



Pinched (1917)

for a brief vaudeville stint (since it looked like the Photoplayers Weekly spelling of "Larkin" was probably indeed a typo), returned from late 1914 into 1916, and worked at Rolin for a couple weeks in 1917. But what else? No other credits could be found, no Variety obituary. Could he have been a career vaudevillian doing his brief stint in the movies and never achieving stardom? Where did he come from and where did he go?

In the 1914 Los Angeles City Directory, a C.M. Lakin, actor, was living at 545 Wall in downtown Los Angeles. Then, from 1915-1919, he disappears. Then in the 1920 Los Angeles City Directory, a Charles M. Lakin was listed as living at 403 S. Bixel, just northwest of downtown Los Angeles. His occupation was still listed as "actor." What was he acting in? Since it doesn't specify "photo-player," could he perhaps have been working on stage locally? He is missing from the 1921 directory, but in 1922 a Charles Lakin (no initial, no occupation) is living at 520 S. Flower.

Then, from 1923 to 1925, he is gone. Possibly, Lakin was bouncing around the stage, picking up work here and there, and possibly returning to L.A. for film bits. But if so, what films did he appear in?

In the 1926 book, Charles M. Lakin, actor, is living at 534 105th Street in Los Angeles, apparently his first permanent address in Los Angeles. He would appear in the book at this address – near the intersection of Figueroa in South Central Los Angeles, and a bit far away for someone working in Hollywood at the time – through 1931, with his wife's name given as "Isabella."

Fortunately, the 1930 Census is now available, which tells us a bit more about Charles M. Lakin, the erstwhile "Funny Eyebrow Guy." He owned his own home, valued at \$7500, owned a radio set, was white, age 36 (which means he was born circa 1893-94), married and was not a military veteran. He was born in Massachusetts, and both his parents were born in Russia. This information about his parents, along with some of the roles that he played might suggest the possibility that he was of Jewish descent. The Census also shows that he was first married at age 26, which would have been about 1919. His wife, Isabel, was age 31 and was 24 at the time of her first marriage. This seems to suggest that Lakin married her circa 1923, his second marriage and her first. It also mentions that she and her parents were born in Pennsylvania. No children or other relatives were living at the home.

However, most interesting is the employment information. Charles M. Lakin gives his occupation as "actor," his industry as "film - motion picture" and his status as "unemployed." However, his wife Isabel's occupation is listed as "addressograph," the industry "stationary." Could it be that Isabel Lakin was slaving away at the addressograph machine to support her out-of-work actor hubby? Did Charles Lakin have another source of income, a family inheritance perhaps? After all, he owned his own home at a time when most bit actors were only renting. Did he have another source of income he wasn't declaring on the census? Did he have any work in films between the years 1917 and 1931? Charles M. Lakin disappears from the City Directory after 1931, though there is a Charles Lakin (no initial, no occupation) listed at two different addresses: in 1935 at 207 N. Oxford Ave. and 1936 at 109 S. Normandie.

Jumping years ahead now, the California Death Index and the Death Certificate for one Charles Mark Lakin reveal a little more information, matching details on the 1930 census. He was born on Christmas Day, December 25, 1893 in Massachusetts. His father and mother were born in Russia, and his mother's maiden name was Lena. He died on November 28, 1965, at County Harbor General Hospital on 1000 W. Carson in Torrance, located in the South Bay area of southwest Los Angeles County. At the time of his death he was living at 26326 Ozone Avenue in Harbor City, California, and was working as a salesman at nearby Green Hills Memorial Park in Rancho Palos Verdes. And that is where Charles Mark Lakin is buried, alongside wife Isabel Louise Lakin (she was born on October 18, 1896, her mother's maiden name was Morrison, and she preceded her husband in death on October 28, 1962). An obituary in the South Bay Daily Breeze gave the information that he was from Boston, Massachusetts, and reiterated that he was a salesman at Green Hills. It also mentioned that he was survived by a brother named Russell Arnsperger.

Finally, one Saturday, I took a trip to Green Hills Memorial Park, located on a rolling hill between the gritty Los Angeles port communities of San Pedro/Harbor City and the opulent homes of Rancho Palos Verdes. After finding the gravestones of Charles and Isabel Lakin, I stopped by the park administration, hoping there was some evidence of the salesman who had worked there at least 40 years earlier. Amazingly, there was one woman named Maxine who had worked there since the late Forties. She wasn't in, but a quick phone call to her home confirmed that, "oh yes, I remember Charlie Lakin." I left her a note with a series of questions and some frame-captures of Charles Lakin from several Keystone films. A week later, she called me back to confirm that, yes, the man in the photos was definitely "Charlie Lakin." Even though the man she knew was much older than the person in the frame captures (who was in his early twenties), his distinctive facial features apparently were unmistakable to her. She remembered that he always called his wife "Babe," that he loved to gamble, and frequented the gambling ships that used to park off the coast of San Pedro outside the three mile limit. Without my asking, she noted that she assumed him to be Jewish – having what to her sounded like a Jewish accent. I asked her about his personality, assuming that a former comedian who became a salesman was probably outgoing and gregarious. She confirmed this, saying that he had "a wonderful personality, very kind." She said he worked there for eight years, and during that time lived on the 1500 block of Lakme Avenue in nearby Wilmington. She had no idea that he was a former actor, and knew nothing about his life or occupations

before joining Green Hills, though she didn't rule out the possibility that he may have shared more information about his background with other employees. However, it also could be that he had put that part of his life behind him, not interested in playing the "I used to be in movies" card with acquaintances because it brought back memories of starvation.

Sometime between the Thirties and the Sixties, Charles Lakin had left the acting profession to enter "civilian life." We don't know for certain what he did during some of that period, but his last known occupation as a salesman at a cemetery can't help but dredge up images of Liberace's character in *THE LOVED ONE*, the black comedy released the year of Lakin's death. Did Lakin's gift of actor's gab successfully entice bereaving loved ones to move up from a pine to a mahogany casket as a more fitting tribute to the dear departed? (Ironically, it was Maurice "Ted Edwards" Burrell, not Charles Lakin, who played the assistant of funeral director Josef Swickard, delivering a floral wreath to a temporarily grieving Minta Durfee in *AMBROSE'S FIRST FALSEHOOD*.)

Both men had entered the fledgling motion picture industry at the Keystone studios in 1914, perhaps dreaming of film stardom. In both cases, it was not to be, but because their faces are preserved alongside Charlie Chaplin, Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle, Mabel Normand and others who are remembered more fondly, there is a small shred of immortality for the images of Maurice Burrell and Charles Lakin—at least more than your average carpenter or casket salesman.

Ted Edwards Filmography

Keystone-Mutual

1914

CAUGHT IN THE RAIN (Cop Outside Bar)
THE LOVE THIEF (Cop)
GENTLEMEN OF NERVE (Bystander Knocked Over By Conklin / Man in Bleachers)
HISTRYSITING PLACE (Diner with White Shoes)
FATTY'S JONAH DAY (Cop)
AMBROSE'S FIRST FALSEHOOD (Funeral Director's Assistant)
TILLIE'S PUNCTURED ROMANCE (Waiter)
GUSSLETHE GOLFER (First Cop) (with Charles Lakin)

1915

FATTY AND MABEL'S SIMPLE LIFE (Minister)
PEANUTS AND BULLETS (Cop)
HOGAN'S ROMANCE UPSET (Athletic Club Member) (with Charles Lakin)
HEARTS AND PLANETS (Reverend D. Burns)
THAT SPRINGTIME FEELING (Cop)
FATTY'S RECKLESS FLING (Poker Player)
FATTY'S FAITHFUL FIDO (Gymnasium Man) (w/Charles Lakin)
WHEN LOVE TOOK WINGS (Minister)
AMBROSE'S NASTY TEMPER (Cop)
A BEAR AFFAIR (Lodge Guest in Ranger Hat) (w/Charles Lakin)
THE CANNONBALL (Prospective Powder Customer) (with Charles Lakin)
FATTY'S PLUCKY PUP (Hired Thug)
FATTY'S TIN TYPE TANGLE (Cop) (with Charles Lakin)

Keystone-Triangle:

1915

A SUBMARINE PIRATE (Waiter in Background) (w/Charles Lakin)

1916

HIS LYING HEART (Customer)

1917

THIRST (Floor Washing Boarder)

Chaplin-First National:

1918

A DOG'S LIFE (Unemployed Man)

Charles Lakin Filmography

Keystone-Mutual:

1914

THE KNOCKOUT (One of St. John's Gang)
THE PROPERTY MAN (Audience Member)
HIS PREHISTORIC PAST (Caveman)
HIS SECOND CHILDHOOD (Friend of Harry McCoy)
GUSSLETHE GOLFER (Prisoner) (with Ted Edwards)

1915

FATTY'S NEW ROLE (Saloon Patron in Derby and Stubble)
MABEL AND FATTY'S MARRIED LIFE (Fatty's Business Associate)
HOGAN'S ROMANCE UPSET (Athletic Club Member) (with Ted Edwards)
WILLFUL AMBROSE (Bartender)
FROM PATCHES TO PLENTY (Waiter)
BEATING HEARTS AND CARPETS (A Friend of Charlie Murray)
THAT LITTLE BAND OF GOLD (Page Boy)
AMBROSE'S LITTLE HATCHET (Presser)
FATTY'S FAITHFUL FIDO (Coat Check Attendant) (w/Ted Edwards)
DROPPINGTON'S FAMILY TREE (Diner)
DO-RE-ME-BOOM (Park Boyfriend)
A BEAR AFFAIR (Hunter in Lodge) (w/Ted Edwards)
THOSE BITTER SWEETS (Picnicker)
A HASH HOUSE FRAUD (Cop)
THE CANNONBALL (Prospective Powder Customer / Cop in Station) (with Ted Edwards)
FATTY'S TIN TYPE TANGLE (Cop) (with Ted Edwards)
NO ONE TO GUIDE HIM (Dinner Guest)

Keystone-Triangle:

1915

CROOKED TO THE END (Train Passenger)
A SUBMARINE PIRATE (Desk Clerk) (with Ted Edwards)

1916

BECAUSE HE LOVED HER (Cook)

Rolin Film Company:

1917

PINCHED (Cop)

Jess Dandy Remembered

By Barbara Danzig

Except where noted, all illustrations from author's collection

“ Jessie Danzig, originator of plays. Poker, euchre, and pinochle players need not apply.” So Jess Dandy wrote in the *Mount Hope Gazette*, April 29, 1889. Perhaps as a teenager he could already glimpse his future career as a vaudevillian and a stage and film actor. Whether he could have anticipated the degree of his success and fame is hard to tell.

I cannot remember a time when Uncle Jess was not part of my life. He died before my grandparents were married, but he has always been there, in notebooks full of newspaper articles, photos, and a playbill or two. As if proof of the benefit of being a good son, the articles he enclosed in his daily letters to his mother have become his legacy and ensured that the family would remember his work. Sadly, the letters are gone, but the scrapbooks his brother, my grandfather, Lester, made from the enclosures are my treasures now.

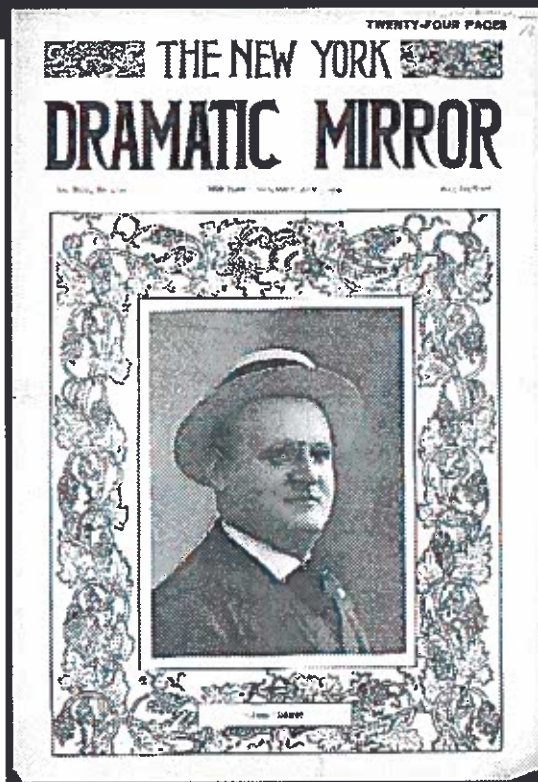
Over the years, I have been able to locate other records, including the Locke Collection in the NY City Public Library for the Performing Arts, that have augmented and improved my collection. Additionally, I used Internet searches that have put me in touch with folks who share my interest in Jesse Danzig and provided me with invaluable information that was otherwise beyond my reach.

Jesse Danzig was born in Rochester, NY, or Hartford, CT, in 1872 or 1874, depending on the sources consulted. I have settled on Rochester in 1874, based on where his parents lived and Lester's comment that Jesse died before he was 50 years old.

Jesse's father was Abraham Danzig, who emigrated from Prussia in 1851. His mother was Jennie Stern, the daughter of German immigrants who was born in Hartford, CT. Jennie and Abraham were enumerated in the U.S. Census of 1870 when she was 18 and he was 31 years old, and they were living in Rochester, NY. Enumerated with them was Abraham's business partner, Max Levison. An advertisement in the *Rochester Union and Advertiser* on July 7, 1869, announced: “Hats, Hats, Hats, Bonnets, Bonnets, Bonnets (Trimmed and Untrimmed) at Prices Never Heard of In Rochester, at Danzig & Levison, No. 7 Main Street Bridge.”

The family relocated to New York City by the Census of 1880 and lived on Lexington Avenue. The Census of 1900 indicates that they lived in the Bronx in the house that was to be Jesse's home for the rest of his life. The 1900 Census shows Jesse's profession as “actor.”

Jesse was the oldest of Jennie's and Abraham's six children. The four boys and Abraham are captured in a photo of the Suburban Baseball Club. Jesse



Courtesy Cathy Childs

looks cocky and pleased to be the manager; Walter is well dressed and dapper in a bowler hat; and Seymour and Lester are in players' uniforms.

Several newspaper articles indicate that Jesse initially pursued a medical career and was a political campaigner, but he decided that sales were more to his liking. They say he enjoyed making people laugh and took to the road as a comedian. While the details of Jesse's early years are not well documented, according to the *New York Dramatic Mirror* of July 7, 1900 he began his vaudeville career in 1898 at the American Theatre Roof Garden in New York City where he was an immediate hit. He took his act on the road and toured the US with great success. By 1900, Jesse Danzig had become Jess Dandy and was headlining on vaudeville with notable success.

The *Boston Journal* called him a Boston favorite on April 22, 1901, and said his act received several encores. The *Syracuse Post Standard* of February 20, 1903, headlined their review, “Dandy Made a Hit at the Bastable.” The review describes his act as consisting entirely of parodies, including “Rosey Where Is Our Mosey” and “Rip Van Winkle Was a Businessman.” They note that his make-up and demeanor are novel and refreshing.

In July 1903, *The Baltimore Herald* reviewed Jess's vaudeville act and provided some insight into his act and his groundbreaking characterization:

Jess Dandy, a Hebrew parodist [appearing in] Baltimore made the hit of the show at the Electric Park last night. Dandy differs from Hebrew comedians of the common or garden variety in two important particulars. In the first place he does nothing but sing and has no monologue of venerable jokes. And, in the second place, he portrays, not the type of Russian or ghetto Jew with whom all patrons of vaudeville are familiar, but the prosperous, well-dressed Hebrew of the commercial sort, with a loud waistcoat and diamonds. The picture is, of course, overdrawn and the whole thing is a burlesque, but Dandy's dialect and mannerisms are very clever copies and his success is deserved. His parodies, in the main, are funny, though one of those he sang last night was unnecessarily vulgar.

Jess remains notable for his Hebrew impersonations and is recognized for developing the new characterization in histories of vaudeville. In his book, *Vaudeville, From the Honky-Tonks to the Palace*, Joe Laurie, Jr., put it this way: “— there were a number of Jewish comics who stuck to the old make-up, crepe hair, misfit clothes, hat over the ears, etc., until a man by the name of Jess Dandy ‘cleaned up’ the character. He didn't use any of these traditional things. — He was a fine monologist,



Jess Dandy as Manager of Suburban Baseball Club, c1908

but didn't play vaude very much, as he made a hit in musical comedy." Interestingly, Jess was not Jewish. His family's religion was Unitarian.

1903 was to provide a turning point in Jess's career. A popular comic opera, *The Prince of Pilsen*, was touring the United States. It was in Chicago when the actor who had originated the part of Hans Wagner took a vacation. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Jess filled in for him beginning on August 17, 1903. They describe Jess this way, "— former vaudeville top liner who is considered one of the best German dialect comedians in vaudeville." Jess garnered excellent reviews and stayed in the role of Hans Wagner, off and on, for 15 years.

It was as Hans Wagner, the German-American brewer of Pilsner beer from Cincinnati who is mistaken for the Prince of Pilsen while in Nice, France, that Jess made famous the question the character asks repeatedly throughout the show, "Vas you effer in Zinzinnati?" Articles were written about him (and some by him) focusing on how he developed just the right way to roll the question off his tongue; how he played the scene where a drunk Hans played in a live fountain on stage; and how he obtained the old suits needed for the part. A series of cartoons of Jess as Hans were drawn and widely published. In short, he was now famous.

Anecdotal newspaper items became common concerning both his life as an actor and his personal life. The Locke Collection held by the New York City Public Library for the Performing Arts holds many



Two of a series of cartoons of Jess Dandy as Hans Wagner in *The Prince of Pilsen*.

wonderful stories that provide insights into Jess's life along with often repeated "jokes" that he told which were published in many newspapers around the country.

In 1907, Jess was reported to own a fast horse, which he rode in the Bronx. He drove a "timber-topping" Cadillac in 1909. In 1911, he had a nickel-plated car that he valued at \$2,600 when it was stolen in what he called a "dastardly robbery."

One of my favorite stories is about the time he was "arrested" by a bicycle policeman for driving on the wrong side of the road. It seems the intersection had a triangular patch of grass and was poorly marked. After being arrested, Jess saw two other drivers also on the wrong side of the road. He called a policeman and insisted they be arrested as well. Then he rolled up a newspaper making a megaphone that he used to warn other drivers. All of those arrested were discharged when Jess argued their case before the magistrate. (Reported in the *New York Telegraph*, May 17, 1909.)

According to the *New York Review* of December 19, 1909, Jess was the Senior Partner in Danzig Brothers, manufacturers of women's apparel. Although I have not found this company in any City Directories, my grandfather told my father about the family having such a business. He said it was located in New Jersey, and that they were the first dress company to cut multiple layers of fabric at one time.

Other insights from the reviews and anecdotal stories fill in some features of Jess's life in New York and on the road. Apparently, there was a tennis court adjacent to his home in the Bronx, and his den was filled with hunting paraphernalia and a moose's head. A next-door neighbor raised chickens, and Jess raised flowers. As a member of the school board in the Bronx, Jess took an interest in educational issues and spoke to school children on at least one occasion while on the road.

Jess was also a songwriter. A newspaper article mentions that he wrote songs under his real name and provides an anecdote concerning Jess's interaction with a vaudevillian who featured one of his songs in her act. According to the article, after Jess identified himself as the songwriter, the performer demanded royalties for promoting it. The situation resolved itself, to Jess's chagrin, when the singer changed a couple of words and claimed the song as her own. Other articles mention that he wrote parodies only for himself, despite the entreaties of other performers that he write some for them.

While I have not yet found a song that he wrote, there is sheet music of a song from *The Prince of Pilsen* in the music collection at the Library of Congress. The song is entitled "Imagination," and above the title are the words, "Jess Dandy's Song Hit in *The Prince of Pilsen*." In the lower right hand corner is a picture of Jess and his name.

A mystery also involves *The Prince of Pilsen* score. Many reviewers praise a song that Jess sang entitled, "It Is the Dutch," saying it brought down the house. However, it is not in the libretto, and, despite years of effort, I have never found a copy of this song.

Jess performed many times on Broadway and took several plays from there on the "road." He originated characters in two musicals, *Marcelle* (1908) and *The Neverhomes* (1911). Meanwhile, for a total of 15 years, he played Hans Wagner in *The Prince of Pilsen* 4,040 times and appeared in every city with a population of 15,000 or more. He then originated characters in three plays, *Object Matrimony* (1916), *Success* (1918), and *Iust Married* (1921). In 1914, he was engaged to play in *Auction Pinochle* in Los Angeles. His other plays included *Friendly Enemies* and *The Grass Widow*.

In 1913, Jess also wrote and starred in a short play for the vaudeville stage entitled, *The Nodding Idol*. While it was not particularly well received, it was remembered 15 years after Jess's death in a 1938 news-

paper in a remember when comic headed, "Twenty-Five Years Ago."

When Jess was signed to play Herman Dinglebender in The Neverhomes, the *New York Review* said, "Jess Dandy is one of the best known comedians on the American stage." Helen Hayes was in The Neverhomes, and it was produced by Lew Fields. It opened at the Broadway Theatre.

According to the *New York Times*, Jess had throat trouble in 1907 and had several operations. If the trouble persisted, it may have been evident in 1913, when a reviewer cites his "incapacity for song" in a review that is favorable despite the apparent problem. He was ill again in 1915 and missed some of The Prince of Pilsen tour.

According to a family letter, Uncle Jess adopted a dog that was a veteran of the World War I trenches. His name was Cognac, and Jess would yell "Hun" and watch the little dog go crazy.

Despite the volume of information I have concerning my great uncle, I only had a hint as to his film career. His work in Keystone films with Charlie Chaplin is mentioned in a couple of obituaries with one film named. Unfortunately, he is not in that film, and I now know that it was produced 2 years after his work at Keystone.

Jess Dandy was not mentioned in any filmography of Chaplin's or Keystone's that I could find. However, he is mentioned in John McCabe's biography, Charlie Chaplin. McCabe quotes Charlie Chaplin, Jr., and Jess is referred to as "the stock Sennett fat man."

In the winter of 2002, I discovered the fun of doing a "Google" search on the Internet. I had searched for Uncle Jess on other occasions using various search engines and usually found a tidbit or two. Never did I expect to have Jess Dandy's film career unfold as it did in February 2002.

The Google search led me to meeting Brent Walker, a slapstick aficionado, and Steve Rydzewski, editor of *Slapstick!* magazine, via e-mail. I was astonished to learn that a gentleman named Bo Berglund of Malmö, Sweden, had recently unraveled the mystery of Jess Dandy's role in Keystone films. I had finally found people interested in the history of Jess Dandy that I had been tending and extending my whole life.

Brent and Steve shared the list of Uncle Jess's films with me and led me to Grapevine Video, who supplied me with copies of the Chaplin films. There he was, alive and kicking Charlie Chaplin's behind. Need I point out that I think he was wonderful, brilliant, amazing? In fact, he was good and his stage presence obvious. He used many gestures that are familiar to me from growing up as a Danzig.

The list as Brent Walker gave it to me follows:

Films Starring Charlie Chaplin with Jess Dandy:

THE PROPERTY MAN (Aug. 1, 1914) (Garlico, the Strongman)
THE FACE ON THE BARROOM FLOOR (Aug. 10, 1914) (Rival)
THE MASQUERADER (Aug. 27, 1914) (Actor Playing Villain)
HIS NEW PROFESSION (aka THE GOOD FOR NOTHING) (Aug. 31, 1914) (Invalid Uncle)
THE ROUNDERS (aka OH WHAT A NIGHT) (Sept 7, 1914) (Diner)
THE NEW JANITOR (Sept 24, 1914) (Bank President)
DOUGH AND DYNAMITE (Oct 26, 1914) (Female Cook)



Portrait autographed to future sister-in-law, Mabel Carney Jayne (author's grandmother) in 1920

Films Starring Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle with Jess Dandy:

FATTY AGAIN (Oct 3, 1914) (Carnival Boss)
LEADING LIZZIE ASTRAY (Nov 30, 1914) (Nightclub Dancer)

The dates of the films coincide with his engagement to play in Auction Pinocchio in Los Angeles, and there is an anecdotal story published concerning his stay at the Athletic Club in Los Angeles at this time. He apparently belonged to the Photoplay Club and performed on a bill that included Charlie Chaplin at a fundraiser club.

By 1915, Jess was back on the road in The Prince of Pilsen. In January 1916, he made his 4,000th appearance in the operetta while in Muskogee, OK. On February 26, 1916, Jess left the cast of The Prince of Pilsen for the last time. He was quoted as saying he would pursue business interests. However, he returned to the stage in a hit play, Object Matrimony, in September of the same year. In 1917, he reportedly

bought the film rights to The Prince of Pilsen and planned to produce and star in it himself. However, he continued on the stage in plays – not musicals – until his death during a run of Just Married in Boston on April 15, 1923.

According to news reports, 500 people, including many who were of the theatre, attended Jess Dandy's funeral. Services were held at St. Cecile's Masonic Lodge, of which he was a member. Other organizations that he belonged to that were represented included the Friars Club, the Elks, the National Vaudeville Artists Association, and the Actors Equity League. He was buried at Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx.

While the City of Cincinnati has no record of it, I now have proof that, as reported at the time, a tree was planted in the city's Eden Park in remembrance of the man who made their city so famous. The planting done by Raymond Hitchcock was captured in a newsreel.



Thanks to Sam Gill and Brent Walker, I have a still picture from the reel – another mystery solved by slapstick aficionados.

Jess Dandy was remembered by his generation and after as a generous man who made people laugh. He is remembered by his family as a dutiful son and as an uncle who slept during the day but was great fun when awake.

Thanks to Bo Berglund, Steve Rydzewski, Brent Walker, Sam Gill, and others, he is also now a man remembered for kicking Charlie Chaplin's behind.

Atlanta, GA, December 2, 1915
while with the Prince of Pilsen Company



The Latest On the New & Improved Version of "The Cook"

By Elif Rongen-Kaynakci

The long lost Fatty Arbuckle/Buster Keaton film THE COOK (1918) was found and preserved in Norway in 1998 and presented to an audience two years later during the Pordenone Silent Film Festival. After this, George Eastman House made an English version by translating the Norwegian intertitles. This film has since been screened on many occasions, and has since been made available on DVD (Buster Keaton - L'Integrale des courts metrages 1917-1923, 4 DVD box set released in France in 2001 by Arte-Lobster).

Now there is an improved version about to be released. In late 2000, Nederlands Filmmuseum came across a 205 meter nitrate negative fragment of the same film. The material arrived in the summer of 2000 after the passing of a private collector. During the quick registration phase that followed, the archivists jotted down a report mentioning Arbuckle dressed as "a cook." It did not take the Film Collection Department long to suspect that this item could be THE COOK.

By the summer of 2001, the identification was confirmed, but a rough comparison with a written plot from the Norwegian version made clear that although their print was incomplete, the Dutch fragment was even shorter. Furthermore, the Dutch version, since it was a long roll of negative, had no intertitles, and some scenes appeared to be in the wrong order.

Everything was put aside for a while, until the spring of 2002, when upon hearing that Milestone Video was about to issue "The Cook and Other Treasures" (along with Arbuckle's A RECKLESS ROMEO and

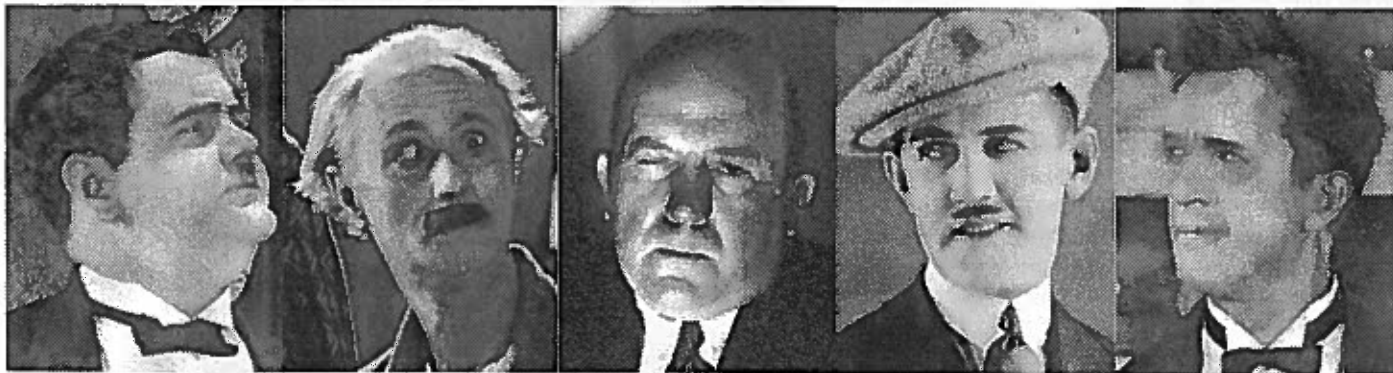
Harold Lloyd's NUMBER, PLEASE?), a Mr. Jon Gartenberg in his communications with the Nederlands Filmmuseum, questioned our material on THE COOK. Milestone asked for a close comparison of the GEH material with the Dutch material and the result was astonishing.

Although both versions roughly cover the same scenes (both lacking the end), the Filmmuseum version misses some scenes entirely, such as Buster flirting with the lady customer. However, it also contains just a few seconds that are fundamental for the plot development, adding some very short scenes filling in some of the jump cuts. Although still not providing us with the complete film, clearly these additions will improve the narration by adding causality. For example, now there is a scene where Al St. John falls on the spaghetti table as a result of being chased by Luke, Arbuckle's dog, and another scene where Buster repeatedly falls off the goat-car (whereas the earlier version only had him trying to get on the car). One of the most dramatic additions is certainly the extreme long shot of Alice Lake taking a dive from the top of the roller-coaster, towards the end of the film.

Milestone Video has edited these extra scenes to the earlier material, and this "improved version" will be available on VHS this December 2002 and on DVD in February 2003. By contributing to this release, Nederlands Filmmuseum hopes that in the near future even more material of the film will re-surface somewhere, making a complete restoration possible.

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Our Versatile Comedians

Film Comedy of Every Trade and Profession as Exemplified by Ham and Bud

By Stanley W. Todd

As originally appeared in
Motion Picture magazine, March 1917

Illustrations Courtesy Sam Gill Collection

In producing modern film comedy, it seems to have become more or less of a fixed fashion to draw upon the professions and trades for material. The mad chase is after something that "has never been done before." When a company has two star comedians, as Kalem has in Ham and Bud, the demand for something new is almost maddening, and the solution is found in poking fun at every known occupation of man.

Practically every film comedian finds it necessary to follow the same tactics. Sometimes the chief fun-maker will go so far as to assume the costume of the trade or profession he is burlesquing, more often not. How many times the poor police force has been maligned is not on record, but it must run up into the millions. Ford Sterling, for instance, is, among other things, a well-recognized comedy police chief.

Charlie Chaplin, of course, should not be left out in this collection. Since his departure from Keystone he has fired comedy howitzers at every trade imaginable. He has been a dentist, a prizefighter, a doctor, a stagehand, a floorwalker, a fireman – but the catalog it too long. The human vocations that the late John Bunny insulted during his time were also without number.

Of present-day comedians, mention in this connection should be made of Roscoe Arbuckle, Chester Conklin, Charles Murray, of Keystone; of Billie Ritchie, Billie Reeves, George Ovey, Burns and Stull, Riley Chamberlain, Frank Daniels, to say nothing of many others. Each week brings them on the screen in some new role common in our daily life. But if any championship prize is to be awarded in this regard, it should, without doubt, go to Ham and Bud, who have been before us for over two years, portraying things that never happen in any one of the hundred or more vocations they have "taken up." The popularity of Ham and Bud comedies is one of those indefinable things that defy explanation. Perhaps it is the good-natured way they turn things topsy-turvy in their conceptions of business life. If you should ask a society belle about them she would probably remark that "they aren't much to look at." The criticism is entirely justified. Ham is never well dressed; in fact, he is a mussy-looking individual, with a dilapidated derby, generous clothing, huge feet, and a mushy mustache. Bud is no better – a diminutive individual who is a stranger to a white collar – a second fiddle to Ham and a human football.

Yet, these two "trades-people" deserve to stand in the spotlight, because, at times, they succeed in being really funny, which is a very difficult thing to do.

Lloyd V. Hamilton and Bud Duncan – when their names are stretched out to the full length – first excited the interest of photoplay fans when Ruth Roland and John Brennan were grinding out comedies for Kalem. The two janitors that slid around the wet floors



in an office-building set forthwith blossomed out into Ham and Bud, ready to shoot holes into various jobs about which comedies were written for them. They soon became as well-known characters as "Mutt and Jeff," which incidentally speaks eloquently of the universal vogue of the motion picture.

When a new comedy is wanted, it is only necessary for the scenario writer to ask: "Have they been trapeze performers?"

A negative answer will result in another "vehicle," with Ham attempting to imitate the circus acrobat and failing miserably, with Bud getting the worst of the bargain and a pretty girl thrown in for good measure. It was some such process as this that brought Ham and Bud on the screen as doctors, dentists, printers, lion-trainers, band-players, street-cleaners, artists models, art connoisseurs, car conductors, army officers, and other jobs without end.

"What next?" you will be tempted to ask.

But Ham has nearly come to the end of his string, for, in the making of one of his strenuous pictures not so very long ago, he fell and broke his leg. The injury was more serious than at first thought, and Bud had to go it alone for some time. Nevertheless, the recent Ham and Bud comedies have shown the same disregard for the personal comfort of the two inseparables and may be taken as typical of all produced by them.

In "Millionaires by Mistake," Ham and Bud started as street-cleaners and then ventured forth into society. Ham's idea of appropriate evening dress was certainly weird, and he fell very readily for the vampire's wiles, but it wasn't long before he was back to manicuring boulevards again. "Ham, the Diver" was Bud Duncan's idea, and Ham had a rigorous experience in a typical diver's suit. In "Ham, and the Hermit's Daughter," the comedians played surveyors and seemed to enjoy it when assisted by a wavy-haired young lady hermit. In "Ham, the Fortuneteller," the said individual took charge of a gypsy tent and gathered in the shekels with the aid of the cards.

Just a few more: In "Ham and the Masked Marvel," the comedian was an absolute fiasco as a knight of the prize-ring. In "The Tank-town Troupe," the comedians were, for a time, the band, but it was, fortunately, the silent drama. In the same picture Bud was the trapeze artist aforesaid, while



Winning the Widow (Kalem, 1916) with Adoni Fovieri and Gus Leonard.

Ham performed some remarkable "lifting" stunts. In "Ham, the Lover," the burly comedian practiced some questionable tactics as a dueler, and, as Ham's second, Bud had no interest in the result either way. Just what would happen to the country if we had generals like Ham and Bud in "Ham Agrees With Sherman" is not difficult to predict, but, to judge only by their get-up, there were very few military proceedings in the drama. This, then, is a sample of the versatility required of our moving picture comedians, who must be a combination of acrobat, actor, and human target.

Ham and Bud have always made things hum at the Kalem Hollywood studio, and they are, in fact, the busiest persons about a place that teems with activity. A visit to watch them work is of much interest. It may be early in the morning before the carpenters have had time to put up the "set." But Ham and Bud are not idle; they are discussing how to get in something "that has never been done before."

"You lift me high up in the air by one hand," you may hear Bud suggest, "and then kick me, and I'll fly straight out of the picture."

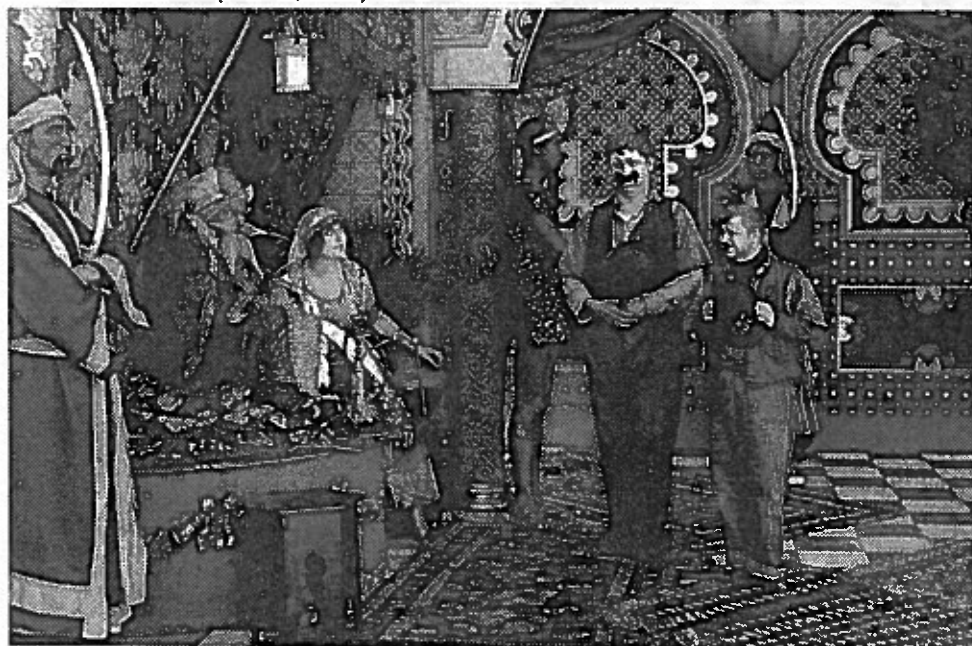
Then the thing happens, and Bud, having invited punishment, takes it without wincing, merely picking himself up and rubbing his injured anatomy rather ruefully. But something happened to the camera, or the film "buckled," or the comedians weren't satisfied.

"That wasn't right. Let's do it over again."

Bud isn't awfully enthusiastic, but he goes thru it, for he knows Ham's turn is coming soon, and maybe the smile of satisfaction that he registers on the screen has some feeling behind it, after all.

Of course both Ham and Bud, in their extended picture career, have had some lively experiences which threatened life or limb, but, possessing apparently charmed lives, nothing serious happened until Ham broke his leg. There was one time when a truant officer stopped the company's work while outdoors, because Bud, in knickerbockers, looked as

Ham In the Harem (Kalem, 1915) with Marin Sais.



though he should be in the little, red schoolhouse. Bud must have had a guilty conscience, and certainly the officer must have lacked spectacles, for Bud ran, and the truant officer chased the wayward "boy." The explanations were somewhat humiliating to the officer. When Ham was making scenes for "The Diver," San Diego Bay was selected as the marine location. It was intended to let him down only a few feet, but a cog slipped, and you can't convince Ham that he did not touch the bottom or that he was under water less than four or five hours. Albert Edward Duncan - Bud's name on Sundays - really achieved a picture career when he was chased out of Mexico two years ago. He was born in Brooklyn and educated at a military school. His father was a well-known ventriloquist, and the son naturally went on the stage. After appearing in vaudeville, he seemed to fit in perfectly as little Jeff in "Mutt and Jeff," as it was produced in the pictures. After that, for some unexplained reason, Bud went with a company that took a voyage from

San Francisco to Mazatlan, Mexico, to take educational pictures of the sea-life peculiar to the gulf of lower California.

When Bud gets to reminiscing, he can tell some interesting things about this trip. The company made the voyage in a forty-foot yawl, arriving at Mazatlan in the midst of a nice little Mexican revolution. Sailing up the gulf to Guymas, they were stopped by the USS Yorktown and put under navy orders on that ship. At Cerros Islands they remained in hiding for two days in the brush, and succeeded in getting photographs of a fish-hawk's nest with its young. At Magdalena Bay they made a three-reel picture of the whaling industry, and Bud started his comedy tricks again, when he fell overboard while the whale was being captured. Ultimately, things got so hot for the little party that they had to seek refuge on the USS Justin. Bud arrived later at Los Angeles and hooked up with Kalem to form a comedy team with Ham.

SlapStick!



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Thanks for your support!!

Billy Ritchie

Star of the L-Ko Comedy Company

From an unidentified issue Motion Picture Stories, 1915

“Yes, I will give you my biography,” said Billy Ritchie, one of the most inimitable comedians in the business, “and, to start the story right, I will have to tell you that I was born in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1877, which makes me thirty-seven years of age. As you can see, my complexion is dark, I stand about 5 feet 7” inches, my hair is black, and I weight about 140 pounds. I have only been in the Moving Picture business about six months, but have had quite a varied experience in other lines of endeavor.

“For example, although I have never written scenarios, I have written and composed a number of vaudeville sketches, the most popular one being “The London Fire Brigade,” which was played all over the country. In addition to that, I have been on the stage, playing “A Night In An English Music Hall,” “A Night On Broadway,” “Vanity Fair,” “Around the Clock,” and a number of other well-known plays.

“I have played and produced for Gus Hill for over eight years, and have been in the theatrical business practically all my life, taking various parts from comedy to drama.

“I appeared before her majesty, Queen Victoria, at Balmoral Castle, Scotland, with the Pinder & Ords circus while I was playing clown with that firm in the summer of 1893.

“In America I have become best known as the “Drunk.” In fact, I was the originator of that part in this country, in the play, “A Night In An English Music Hall,” a part which I have played over five thousand times, and with it have made all the big circuits of America, England and France.

“I was with Ford Karno, England’s greatest producer of pantomimes, for ten years. My preference is for comedy parts.

“I am a married man, and my friends call me “Billy.” Of course I spend a larger part of my time in the studio working, but during my moments of relaxation I like nothing better than reading Shakespeare, Kipling, or Bums. I am particularly fond of an out-of-door life, and, when I get the chance, indulge in my favorite sports of golfing, football, motor-boating, fishing and hunting.

“It has always been my ambition to keep my comedy work clean and free from vulgarity. All performers have their theories of what makes a good comedy. I’ve got my own ideas about it, of course. The average audience of “grown-ups” prefer refined comedy, but the slapstick variety is the type that appeals to the young ones. Little folks with lively imaginations like to see something doing all the time, and broad, farcical situations never fail to

appeal to their risibilities. It is only the children who applaud a screen play which they like, and for that reason we know the type they like best. You can safely figure that half the audiences at picture houses are the juvenile element, and consequently it is safe to play to their preferences in comedy. That is why so many broad farces and knockabout acts are used – they are sure to get a

laugh. In the study of a part, a comedian must be exceedingly careful to get everything just right, for the camera portrays every expression and movement. Once the record is made, it cannot be changed, you know. I am very particular about seeing the part assigned to me before I use it, and when I have studied out every situation I add bits of comedy business which will help the scene along. Sometimes I think the action out ahead, but more frequently let the funny movements come spontaneously while I am acting. Forcing one’s self to do a part is never as good as when the comical action comes on the spur of the moment.

“In the matter of make-up, I have adopted a certain style and stuck to it. A comedian gets to be known by his usual appearance. It’s a sort of trade-mark. The make-up I use for the L-Ko comedies is strictly original with me. I am an originator – not an imitator. I have played for a great many years in this particular make-up.

“During my brief career as a Moving Picture actor, I have met with a number of funny incidents in real life. For example, on an occasion we were doing a scene in the city streets. In order to avoid collecting a crowd, our cameraman had his instrument concealed. The director gave me the part of a drunk to enact. Accordingly, I came staggering up the street in a grotesque rig, and tried to make the scene as realistic as possible. A cop spied me, and, with visions of promotion floating through his brain, pounced on me. I got a crack on the leg

from his locust, and grabbed him. We landed on the sidewalk in a tight embrace, and rolled over and over in the dirt, fighting like a pair of wildcats. The camera man kept grinding, and afterward produced a very realistic picture. Of course the director and the rest rushed up and explained matters, but the cop was so mad he wanted to arrest me, anyhow. The matter was finally patched up all right, and we finished the scene. From that time I’ve always been careful when acting in street scenes to have the camera where it can be seen. I could tell you many more funny happenings, but I guess this one will do for the present. Going? Well, goodbye. Call again.”





Tragedy Halts Turpin's Comic Roles

As originally appeared in Paris and Hollywood magazine April 1926

Author Uncredited

To the world he is just a fun-maker, even the popular song, have featured his eccentric, million dollar pair of eyes. The slapstick movie is scarcely complete without a close-up of Ben Turpin and his talented eyes meeting with all the rebuffs of a comedian's life on the screen.

Yet while thousand were laughing at the antics of his crossed eyes and funny falls in movie houses throughout the country, few noted the little newspaper item recently telling of the death of Mrs. Carrie Turpin, wife of the comedian. While comedy smirked before the footlights, tragedy lurked in the wings for the famous Mack Sennett star.

To their friends the married life of the Turpins was regarded as one of the few perfect examples of matrimony in Hollywood. At a time when stars acquired a new wife or husband almost with the seasons, the Turpin's marriage endured for eighteen years. Their life together began in the cheap vaudeville theatres where Turpin was struggling along with an act consisting in the main of his funny falls. In vain he tried to remedy the accident of his crossed eyes, and was content to drift along with the tide, careless and without ambition. In a Chicago theatre he met Carrie LeMieux, who was playing on the same bill. It was evidently a case of love at first sight, for within a week the two troupers were married.

Then Ben chanced to try his luck before the camera, and Sennett, realizing the comic possibilities in Turpin's crossed eyes, elevated him to a leading role in his galaxy of fun-makers. The first few pictures justified Sennett's judgment, and Turpin was made. The tramp comedian achieved a financial success beyond his wildest dreams, and the Turpins

were able to live in the utmost luxury. Riches, however, did not change the even tenor of their married life, and they retained throughout the devotion that had characterized their life on the small town vaudeville circuits.

But just as their ambitions had been realized, the health of Mrs. Turpin began to fail. The best doctors were called in consultation, but all the resources of medicine seemed without avail. Mrs. Turpin grew steadily worse.

During her illness the only thing that brought temporary solace from pain was the presence of her husband at her bedside. In order to be continually with her, Turpin broke all his contracts at the studios. Without publicity or gesture he relinquished his position as the premier funny man of filmdom.

Together the Turpins journeyed across the continent to the famous shrine in Canada just outside Quebec. When medical science failed, they sought superhuman relief. At this little shrine they remained for many days, praying for a cure. And for a time it seemed that their prayers were to be answered. Mrs. Turpin began to regain her health, and they returned to Hollywood again, anticipating that the return of her strength would be only a matter of time.

Still Turpin refused to appear again in the pictures, and devoted all this time to the needs of his wife, believing that eventually she would be fully restored to health. Their hopes, however, were not to be realized. Within a short time Mrs. Turpin suffered a relapse. And soon a stroke of paralysis brought an end to her sufferings. Tragedy had driven comedy from the home of the great comedian.

Ben Turpin

Mack Sennett & Beyond

– Part Three –

With his retirement on April 9, 1925, Ben Turpin's fans thought they had seen the last of their star. It took the death of his wife, letters from fans around the world, and the love of a new woman to get Ben to return to the screen in 1926.

Many were the typewriter ribbons used on sob stories about Ben Turpin and his devotion to his sick wife. Ben gave up his screen career to care for her, and when she died Ben was much written of as the sad little clown who made others laugh while stifling his own tears – you know the old line. Alas, for those wasted typewriter ribbons! Ben has shown characteristic masculine resiliency and within a year after Mrs. Turpin's death has reestablished himself on the screen and – here's the point of the story – is planning to take unto himself a new wife! The lady's name is being kept a close secret by Mr. Turpin, but he states that they met at the California Lutheran Hospital during his wife's illness. No date for the wedding has been announced, but the bride-to-be is wearing a large diamond, so Ben evidently means it.

Source unknown, early/mid 1926

Babette Elizabeth Dietz was born December 29th, 1886 in Wurtemberg, one of five children of Albert F. and Elizabeth Dietz, all of whom immigrated to America from Germany in 1892, settling in New Salem, Morton County, North Dakota. Babette's father, Albert, had made a lot of money in the wheat and grain business where Babette may well have received an early education in secretarial skills. By 1920, at the age of 34, she was living and working as a secretary in Los Angeles.

On July 8th, 1926, at the age of 39, Babette married Ben Turpin. Ben would turn 57 years of age two months later. Twenty years later, in 1946, Babette's nephew Herbert Dietz met a girl named Hazel whom he soon married. Hazel Dietz recently told me, "I never met Ben – 'cause I never met (my husband) Herb until 1946. But I've heard a lot about him from Babette and Herb. They said he was a very nice person – good to everyone – and a good cook too – Babette never cooked.

"By the way, Ben had money, but Babette also came from a money family in North Dakota."



Left: Babette Elizabeth Dietz; Below, left to right: the wedding party, July 8th, 1926, with Babette's nephew Herbert Dietz, her mother Elizabeth Dietz, Babette, Ben, Ben's sister Ernestine Knies, and an unidentified young lady in front of the Turpin home, 602 North Canon Drive.



A month after Carrie's tragic death, Ben signed a new contract with Sennett that would pay him three-thousand dollars a week to continue in comedies for Pathe distribution. Less than a week later Ben spent a few days in a Santa Monica hospital for an acute appendicitis operation. His condition must have been pretty serious as, while there, he executed his last will and testament on November 12th.

As early as August 1st, 1926, just three weeks after their marriage, there may well have been problems between the Turpin's and Ben's sister, Ernestine Knies, as evidenced by Ben's revised "Last Will and Testament:"

Aug 1st 1926

I, Bernard Turpin being in sound mind do hereby declare this my last will hereby revoking all previous wills by me heretofore made after all my just debts are paid I bequeath unto my sister Mrs E.E. Knies the Sum of Five Dollars (\$5.00). All the rest and remainder of my Estate real and personal whether under the name of Bernard Turpin or Ben Turpin I hereby bequeath to my beloved my wife Babette Turpin. I hereby appoint my beloved wife Babette Turpin as my executrix to act without Bond

Bernard Turpin

196831
FILED
JUL 24 1940
L. E. LAMPTON, County Clerk
By [Signature]

ADMITTED TO PROBATE
AUG 9 1940
[Signature]
[Signature]

Several years into the future and shortly after his death, Babette brought forth to probate this purported last will of her husband which appointed his widow as executrix and leaving almost everything to her. Nearly a year later on March 10, 1941 Ben's older sister Ernestine contested the purported will stating, in part, that when he composed it, Ben "was not of sound and disposing mind." She continued that, "up to the time of his death, Ben was mentally and physically weak and infirm and was afflicted with disease of body and mind and in his infirmity and credulity he was unable to properly take care of himself... and was easily influenced by those whose custody he came and was easily influenced by artful and designing persons," – namely Babette Turpin. Sounds like a plot right out of one of Ben's comedies, but it was no laughing matter. Ernestine continued, "Babette kept constant company with (Ben) and during a great deal of the time secluded herself and Ben from (his sister). Ben consulted Babette constantly about his business affairs and followed her advice explicitly in all matters, and that he reposed confidence and trust in Babette and she did control and influence his mind and actions to such an extent that he did whatever she suggested and

instructed him to do," and that upon numerous occasions Ben expressed a desire to give presents to the natural object of his bounty (his sister), "but, at the suggestion of Babette, he would suddenly and strangely refuse to carry out such expressed intentions." It was during this time, Ernestine recounted, that this "period and up to the time of his death Babette succeeded in substituting her will for the will of Ben Turpin. At the time of the execution of the purported will, (Ben) was not following the dictates of his own will which would have naturally lead him to have devised and bequeathed his estate to his only heir and sister, whom he had at all times loved as a sister, but he was acting wholly under the influence of Babette, who suggested and dictated to him the terms of the will." Prior to its execution, according to Ernestine, Ben told his sister that she, Ernestine, was to receive all of his property as his heir and sister and had theretofore, on November 12, 1925, executed a will leaving all his property to her. Ernestine claimed that the revised will of August 1st, 1926, which revoked all previous wills by Ben, "was not the free and voluntary act of Ben but the making and execution procured by the undue influence of Babette Turpin." However, to your author, in our present day of pre-nuptial agreements, it does seem slightly suspicious that Ben would compose such a will only three weeks after his marriage to Babette. The result of this court battle will be discussed in a later chapter.

But long before all the problems, Ben had a new companion and had just returned to appear in what was to be another successful series of Sennett Comedies in January 1926.

In that first month of 1926, Turpin was back on the Sennett lot and began work on a two-reeler that wasn't released until August 15th of that year, *When A Man's A Prince*. Moving Picture World wrote: Ben Turpin's return to Sennett comedies is marked by a riot of fun, a burlesque of the mythical kingdom yarn, with the star as a Von Stroheim Austrian prince. The cross-eyed one is as funny as ever, the settings are of feature caliber, the gags are really funny. Madeline Hurlock is a stunning figure in a vamp part. The prince is about to be married off to the princess (Blanche Payson) of a neighboring state in order to recoup the

Ben's return to Sennett, *When A Man's A Prince*, along with the Sennett girls and Hippo Hilda, Blanche Payson.





The Prodigal Bridegroom recounts how he saved Madeline Hurlock to her guardians, Patsy O'Byrne and Vernon Dent

(Blanche Payson) of a neighboring state in order to recoup the finances of the country. He falls in love with Madeline, her lady-in-waiting. Madeline's lover (Danny O'Shea) challenges him to a duel, but the prince has him imprisoned by a trick. Later he tries to escape from Madeline's room at night, but accidentally gets into bed with the Princess. A marriage on the spot is performed and the Prince gives himself up to his misfortune at losing Madeline. He tells her to stick around a few years, that something might happen.

In Turpin's next release, which production started off slow for some unknown reason, *The Prodigal Bridegroom* (re Sept 26, 1926), Rodney St. Clair, Jr., country beau brummel, and Agnes

Boone (Thelma Hill), the St. Clair maid, complete their dance of spring more in love with each other than ever before. Louise Carver, the house-keeper is jealous of Rodney's attentions to the maid. She sees the lovers in a parting embrace and swoons. Determined to go to the city, make a fortune and return to the old homestead and make Agnes his bride, Rodney prepares to leave the farm. He finds it difficult to convince Louise that he does not love her but finally after a series of events in which the hired man (Marvin Lobach), also smitten by Agnes' charms, tries his utmost to embarrass Rodney in the eyes of his loved one, Rodney makes the train and eventually reaches the big



Ben as Rodney St. Clair (left) in *The Prodigal Bridegroom*: and (right) as man-of-the-world/playboy in *A Harem Knight*.



With his favorite customer, Ruth Taylor, Ben as an honest soda-jerker from Podunk, Iowa before being Broke in China.

city. Time passes and Rodney is returning home counting his hundred dollar bills with the nonchalance of a bank teller when Madeline Hurlock, a vamp, and her husband (Dave Morris), a professional crook, witness the money counting and Madeline immediately "falls" for Rodney who, disarmed by her beauty, proposes marriage to her and is accepted. Once Madeline is brought to the St. Clair homestead, father (Andy Clyde), as well as Rodney, is fascinated by the girl. While Ben goes to explain things to Agnes, father proposes to Madeline and is accepted. A long explanation fails to curb the temper of Andy and he summons Lobach to marry his daughter as Ben hurries back home to find Madeline in the arms of his father. He challenges his father to a duel. While the fight is on, Madeline having received a handsome check from father, finds the time opportune for a hasty get-away and departs. Rodney tries to follow, jumps out of a window but his belt catches the outside faucet and holds him. Wiggling to free himself, he accidentally turns on the water and as he hangs, his golf trousers fill with the water to the bursting point. Driving by, the newly-weds Agnes and Marvin laugh and wave farewell to Rodney who now falls from the faucet into a pool of mud and his complicated romance comes to an end.

In *Broke in China* (re April 24, 1927), a film that was in and out of writing and rewriting and on-again off-again with filming, Ben and





With his choice of one of two women, Madeline Hurlock or Louise Carver, who do you think A Harem Knight would choose?

his pal (Donald Maines), both of them sailors, are in Shanghai. They are accosted by a couple of the homeliest women (Louise Carver and Alice Belcher) in a waterfront dive. Neither Ben nor his pal have any money, but Ben, thanks to a pet monkey, accidentally wins a lot of cash at rou-lette. Ben then tells the sad story, in flashback, of how his sweetie (Ruth Taylor) jilted him and how her father, Andy Clyde, threw him out in the street on the day of the wedding. It later turns out that one of the homely women is Ben's mother and his sailor pal his father, he having married her to win an election bet.

In *A Harem Knight* (re Nov 7, 1926), Danny O'Shea, an aviator, carries off the Rajah's Princess, Madeline Hurlock. He knocks Rodney St. Clair over the head and takes his clothes, dressing him in the Princess' gown in order to help her escape. Mistaken for the princess Ben is carried to the Palace. Later the Princess hides in his apartment where Ben finds her. She tells him the sad story of her life and her attempts of escape and he helps her to elope with Danny. Later, what Ben takes for a nightmare is real when he awakes to find himself married to that homeliest woman in the world, Louise Carver, whom Ben always felt

It's love at first sight when Thelma Hill discovers the dashing Baron Bonamo in *The Pride of Pikeville* much to Andy Clyde's displeasure.



someone had put cement in her beauty cream. Moving Picture World thought, "there's a number of amusing situations, and it should please generally."

Reprising his Von Stroheim-type count from earlier shorts, *The Pride of Pikeville* (re June 5, 1927), Baron Bonamo, movie star and ladies man, is traveling in his own Pullman car which has aboard a loving pair of about-to-be newlyweds. The prospective bride, Thelma Hill, a movie fan, catches sight of her hero and he,

The Jolly Jilter must be doing pretty well to get this kind of royal treatment from his servants, Lois Boyd, Bud Ross and Leo Sulky.



in turn, not averse to a new feminine conquest, horns in. The near groom, jealously sizing up the situation determines to let the flirtation proceed. When the parents of the girl have almost permitted the wedding to take place, the jealous one appears on the scene, breaks up the party, routs the Baron, and has the last laugh – and wins out in the end. MPW wrote: "An improbable combination of farcical situations with plenty of slapstick and several humorous twists that should please this stars fans and the majority of patrons." In the film's studio publicity, Sennett wrote: *Since Turpin's return to the screen, his comedies under the Sennett banner have been better than ever – if such a thing could be possible. The grand old man of slapstick is growing younger by the minute, and although old enough to be the father of many of his screen sweethearts, he still holds sway as the screen's greatest lover – crossed eyes and all!*

In *A Blonde's Revenge* (re Dec 19, 1926), Gerald Montague – handsome, a favorite with the ladies and aspiring to be a Senator, is backed by the wealthy Peter Cody. One of Montague's opponents, Tim Hayes, seeking to put a crimp in Gerald's campaign, induces his blonde secretary to hamper his plans by getting her picture taken seated in Montague's lap. The plan is about to work – when Montague's attempted lovemaking to the pretty blonde are hindered by the visit of Tim Hayes wife. The little blonde is quickly hustled out of sight. Then to add to Montague's troubles, along comes another candidate's wife – followed by her husband. Friend/ husband, not knowing of his wife's presence, has a photographer ready to snap a flash photo of the gallant Montague – which he does – but the picture never fulfilled its purpose, for in the melee that followed, the camera was smashed – the women made hasty exits and Montague fooled his foes.

In *The Jolly Jilter* (re March 13, 1927), Turpin, as Virgil Vancourt, Broadway playboy, becomes engaged to Myrtle (Madeline Hurlock), but she doesn't love him. He throws over his old flame, Alma (Bennett), but she comes to his home while he is entertaining Myrtle and her mother (Sunshine Hart), then she threatens to commit suicide. In the midst of the uproar, the cops move in and they are all taken to the police station. Moving Picture World felt the film had, "a number of clever and amusing

The *Hollywood Hero* better watch his step with Alma Bennett; her threatening husband, Bud Jamison, is not far behind



Love's Languid Lure, one of Turpin's last two reelers for Sennett-Pathe, with the sweet girl-next-door, Peggy Montgomery

gags that are good for laughter from the Turpin fans and audiences in general... (and) up to this star's usual amusing standard."

As *A Hollywood Hero* (re Dec 30, 1926), Ben again plays the role of Gerald Montague, this time he's the Screen's Greatest Matinee Idol, who thrilled millions as Prince Juniper in that cinematic masterpiece, "Her Unpardonable Gin." On board a train he is recognized by a fan (Alma Bennett) who begins to rave over him, but her matter-of-fact husband (Bud Jamison) objects seriously. Finally when the wife invites the star to her home and hubby unexpectedly comes in, there is a full quota of excitement and amusing action. When he tries making love to the wife of a man who is strong enough to choke a grizzly with his bare hands, Ben finds out the hard way the trouble he's in. MPW stated, "There are some good gags and the situations are amusing. Bud Jamison does good work in the role of the irate husband, and Harry Edwards has capably directed this production."

As *Love's Languid Lure* (re Aug 28, 1927), Ben, a simple country boob, is engaged to Peggy (Montgomery). A city slicker (Jack Cooper) comes to town and tries to persuade Peggy to run away to the big city with him and study for grand opera. Peggy's

Daddyboy, Ben Turpin's last two reelers for Sennett-Pathe, again with Alma Bennett



mother tells Ben that Jack is making love to her daughter and for he to surprise them. But Jack is wise and when Ben bursts in, Jack is playing solitaire. He gets Ben into a game of poker and "wins" all of Ben's savings. Peggy decides to run away with Jack, and Ben is only consoled when his mother promises to make him some animal crackers.

In his last film for Mack Sennett-Pathe, *Daddyboy* (re Oct 23, 1927), Ben, engaged to Alma Bennett, tells her it is all off when three pretty high school girls come into his office. He then realizes how old Alma is. However, Alma's mother is determined, so she she makes her put on a blonde curly wig and walk down the street, swinging some school books. Ben sees her and falls for her. At dinner, Alma says she is going to bed as it's nine o'clock. She gets a telephone call from the boy she loves telling her to skip out and run away with him. She goes up and gets into her regular clothes and tries to get away, but Ben sees her. When he sees that she is his former fiancée, he tells her to hurry on out, not knowing his new love is the same person. As Ben goes to kiss her good night, he finds only a dummy and this brings on a severe attack of indigestion as the picture ends.

Exactly ten years after he signed with Mack Sennett in March 1927, Ben Turpin had decided he had enough. Sennett had made Turpin a name and a face popular around the world – and a lot of money to boot. Over the years Ben always acknowledged his debt to Sennett, and through the years the extant comedies still continue to bring laughs. Thankfully a nicely representative list of Turpin's Sennett-Pathe comedies are still floating around, and a few of the First Nationals, and shouldn't be missed. Now if only some of those earlier two-reel Paramount's would re-surface!

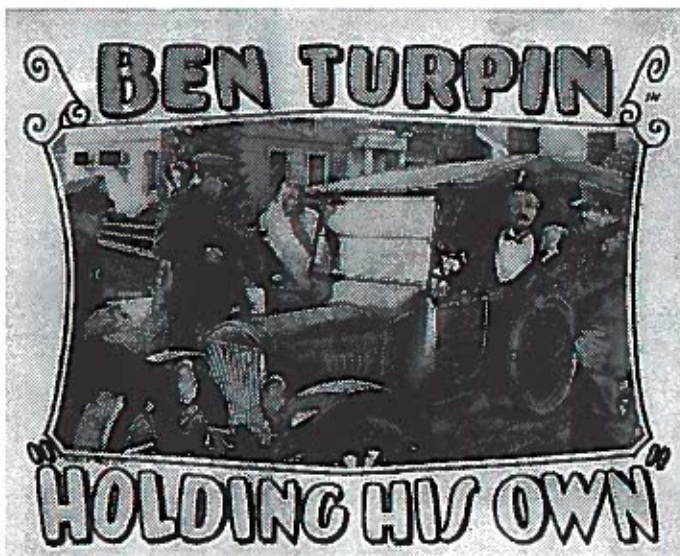


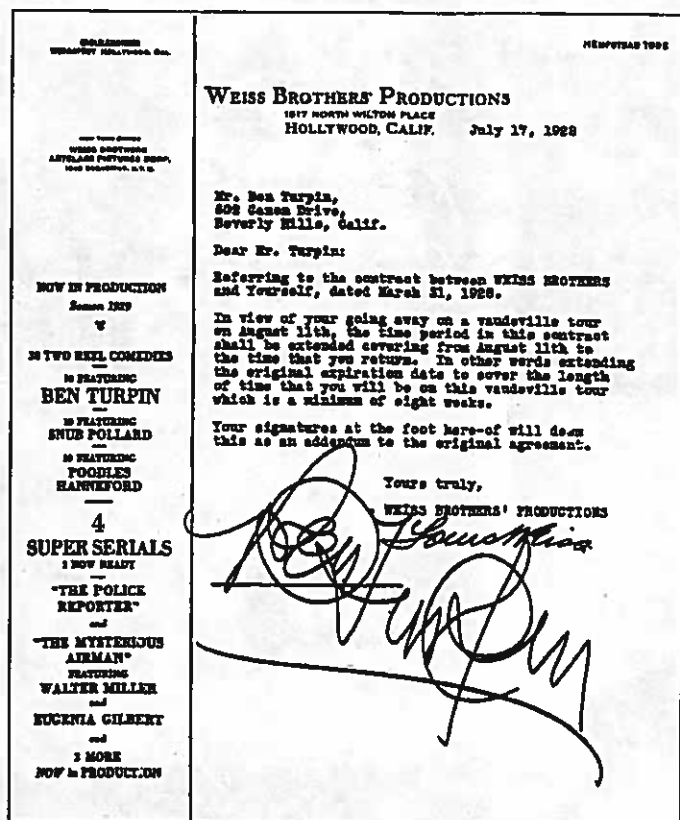
Ben, Shirley Mason and *The Wife's Relations*

Following Sennett, Ben soon returned to the stage traveling throughout the country – and beyond – making personal appearances with much success.

While he was on the road, Columbia Pictures beckoned and Ben managed to knock off a couple of supporting roles in two six reel features, *The College Hero* (re Nov 27, 1927) with Pauline Garon, Bobby Agnew and Rex Lease and *The Wife's Relations* (re Jan 13, 1928) with Shirley Mason and Gaston Glass. In these two films Turpin coincidentally played a character named Rodney St. Clair.

Ben next signed a contract with the independent company Weiss Brothers-Artclass in Hollywood on March 31, 1928 to make ten two-reel comedies. He told Harry T. Brundidge in his *Twinkle Twinkle Movie Star!*, "I'm with a small company now and only work one week a month." While most of the American movie producers were equipping for talking productions at this time and the theaters were wiring for sound, Weiss Brothers continued to crank out silent films. The market for these productions was mostly foreign, and Weiss Brothers-Artclass made a good amount of money exporting their serials such as





The Police Reporter, The Mysterious Airman, and comedies with Snub Pollard, Poodles Hannaford, Jimmy Aubrey, Jack Cooper, and Ben Turpin.



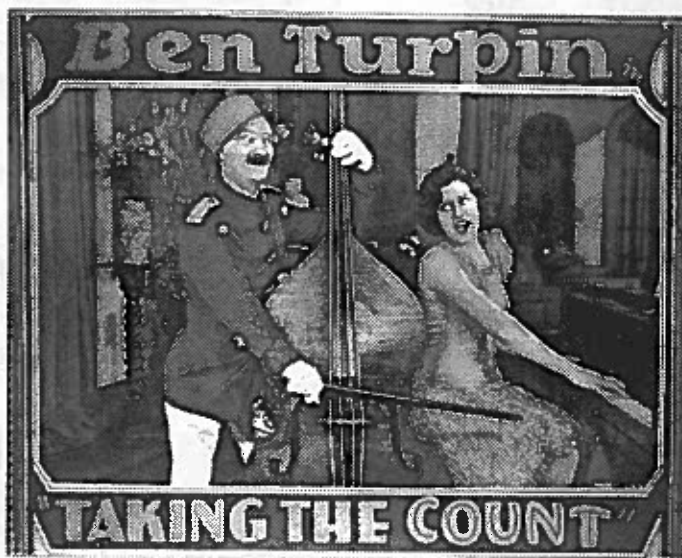
Again with Josephine Borio, Ben is The Cross-Eyed Hero

Many look down upon the Weiss Brothers comedies as pure rip-offs of other films, silly and/or senseless gags and stories. Maybe so in some instances, but it is obvious in his films, Ben is working just as hard as he always did. In *Idle Eyes*, his seventh short for the firm, that's actually Turpin taking a dive into the lake more than one time; he was sixty years old.

But they were full of fun due to Turpin's character and the films survive to this day in positive and negative form in the vaults of Weiss Global Enterprises. Hopefully the company will oneday put together a DVD collection of Ben's Artclass comedies.



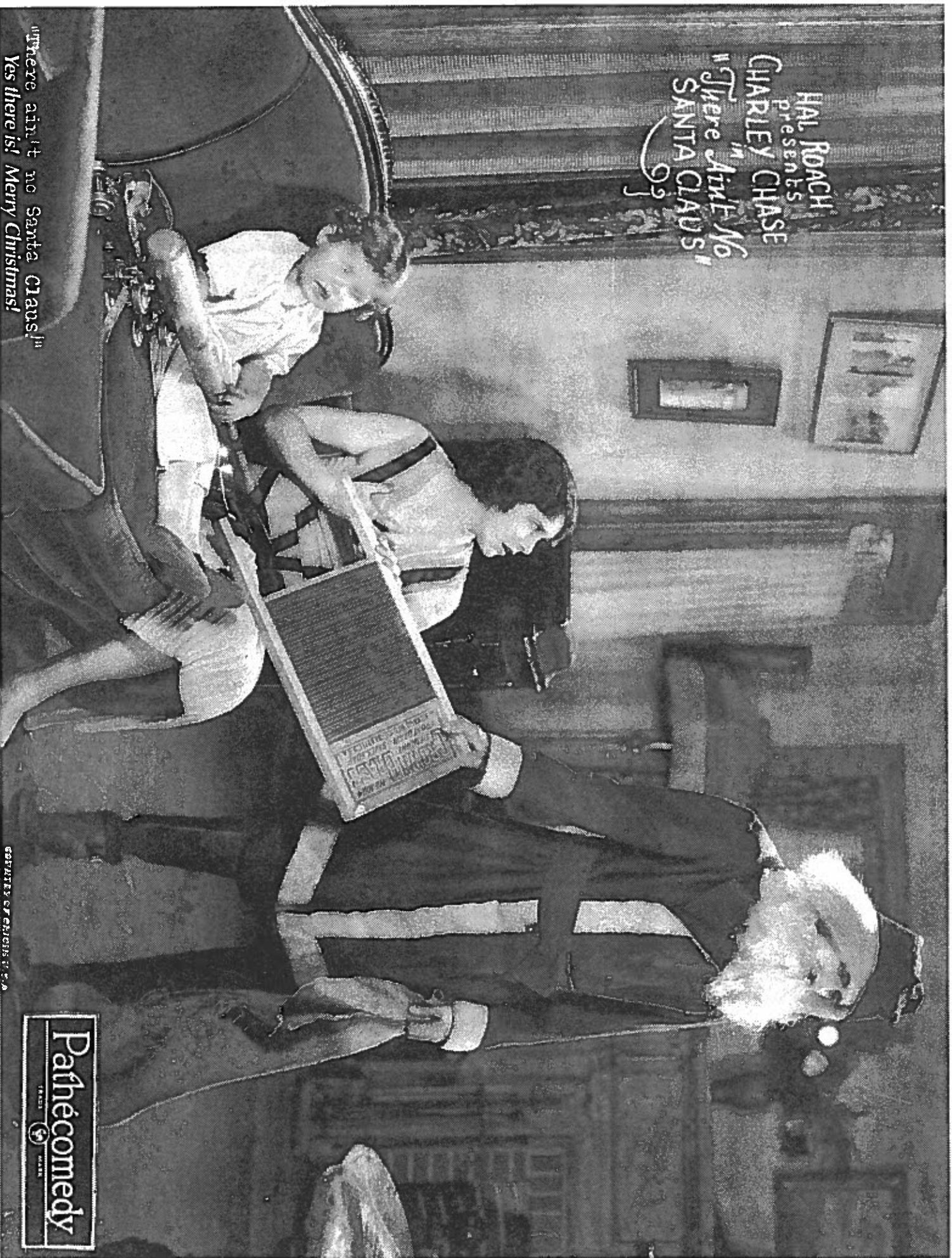
With Josephine Borio, Alice Belcher, Ben & Leo White in Idle Eyes



With Addie McPhail for Weiss Brothers-Artclass

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE
Happy Holidays & Happy New Year to All!

HAL ROACH
presents
CHARLEY CHASE
"There Ain't No
Santa Claus!"



"There ain't no Santa Claus!"
Yes there is! Merry Christmas!

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